



# **High Schools on the Move:**

## **Renewing Vermont's Commitment to Quality Secondary Education**

**Vermont High School Task Force**

Vermont Department of Education

**Montpelier, Vermont**

August 2002

With support from:

**Lamoille South Supervisory Union, Keller & Fuller, Inc. and Creative Vision Design**

The State of Vermont Department of Education is committed to ensuring that all of its programs and facilities are accessible to all members of the public, and that all activities and programs are non-discriminatory in design, application and performance. The Vermont Department of Education is an equal-opportunity agency and does not discriminate on the basis of race, creed, color, national origin, gender, age, handicapping condition and/or disability, or sexual orientation.

This report was prepared with support from Goals 2000 education funds from the U.S. Department of Education. Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the U.S. Department of Education, or any other agency of the U.S. Government.



**STATE OF VERMONT**  
**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**  
**120 State Street**  
**Montpelier, VT 05620-2501**

August 2002

Dear Fellow Vermonter:

In April 1999, the State Board of Education charged the Department of Education to convene a statewide task force to address critical issues facing Vermont high schools. The Vermont High School Task Force, established in October of 1999, included teachers, administrators, business representatives, higher education personnel, parents, state agency personnel and students.

From its inception, the Task Force worked diligently to provide focus, clarity and insight into the challenges facing secondary schools. The Task Force focused on articulating a vision for secondary schools and on identifying learning opportunities to support the vision. This document represents the culmination of the Task Force's work and serves both as a call to action and a tool kit to help educators and communities chart their own courses for change in secondary schools. Within these pages you will find resources to help shape high school renewal efforts. I urge you to use this document often. The work within represents a path to renewed and re-invigorated secondary schools.

On behalf of the education community, I'd like to express sincere appreciation for the hard work and dedication of the Task Force members who volunteered for 2 years working in service for high school renewal. In particular, I'd like to recognize the steering committee members who provided oversight and guidance to this work: Robert Stanton, Ellen Keane, Armando Vilaseca and Andrea Silva McManus. I also would like to thank former commissioners Marc Hull and David Wolk along with Deputy Commissioner Marge Petit for their roles in starting and sustaining this work.

The excellent work, extraordinary commitment and insightful thinking of the Task Force is to be commended. Working in concert to answer challenging questions, the Task Force has developed a solid vision of what Vermont's secondary education can become. The department fully supports this vision and will work to identify resources, both fiscal and human, for this ongoing effort.

Vermont youth deserve an education that prepares them for strong economic, civic and personal futures. The Department of Education looks forward to working with school districts, schools, business representatives, post-secondary institutions and partner state agencies toward this goal. Together we will influence secondary schools to become both highly desirable places to work and schools where each of our students can flourish and launch successfully into adulthood.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ray McNulty".

Ray McNulty  
Commissioner



**STATE OF VERMONT**  
**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**  
**120 State Street**  
**Montpelier, VT 05620-2501**

August 2002

Dear Fellow Vermonter:

In October 1999, the Vermont Department of Education created the Vermont High School Task Force with the charge to examine the current state of Vermont's high schools and, with vigor, professionalism and forward thinking, to make recommendations for improvement. The State Board has been continually impressed with the work the Task Force has accomplished and commends its members for their hard work and commitment to Vermont's schools, students, educators, families and communities.

The work of the Task Force will be significant locally in Vermont, but it also has been recognized and rewarded nationally through the award of one of five \$1 million demonstration grants for high school reform. In addition, The U.S. Department of Education will study the Task Force's work for its implications for high school renewal nationwide.

The Task Force has contributed significantly to school improvement in Vermont. Its findings and recommendations are well aligned with the kinds of issues and standards being examined by secondary schools around the country. The Task Force has placed student learning and performance at the heart of its Twelve Principles and has developed the tools and strategies to assist communities and schools in meeting the diverse needs of their learners.

On behalf of the State Board of Education, I wish to extend to the Vermont High School Task Force our congratulations and deep appreciation for a job well done. The State Board looks forward to working with the Vermont Department of Education and educators around the state to implement the recommendations contained in this report.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David C. Larsen".

David C. Larsen, Chair  
Vermont State Board of Education



# NATIONAL TEACHER OF THE YEAR PROGRAM

*MAKING A DIFFERENCE - SHAPING THE FUTURE*

August 2002

Dear Fellow Vermonter:

I have had the great honor and privilege of serving as the 2001 National Teacher of the Year. It has been both an exciting and a sobering journey over the past year. In Vermont and across the country, I have seen the shared commitment of schools and communities in ensuring their children have the benefit of an excellent education, including at the high school level. The ultimate goal has been to create an education system that respects each child as unique and ensures each is known and valued for who he or she is. I have seen high schools where the talents, interests and aspirations of all students are nurtured, helping them to build a strong foundation upon which they can successfully transition to adulthood.

Despite all the innovative and exciting programs I have seen, more needs to happen. It is with great excitement that I write this letter to endorse this report. As a member of the Vermont High School Task Force, I can speak firsthand to the care, experience, diligence and commitment that went into producing this work. I urge all Vermonters to come together to bring the concepts within this document to life. Our young people need our help now more than ever. With a dropout rate that hovers at 20 percent, we must work diligently to lower it. Additionally, we must ensure that Vermont high schools are safe, caring places where each student meets challenging standards, has multiple pathways to achieve those standards and expects to successfully meet his or her goals.

The Vermont High School Task Force solicited opinions from and listened to a wide range of constituents with a "stake" in high school reform. Task Force members visited schools, met with students, traveled to conferences, reviewed scholarly literature on high school reform and talked with educators who know firsthand the challenges that secondary schools face. They responded brilliantly to the State Board of Education's charge to "examine the current state of secondary schools in both Vermont and the nation" and made recommendations to guide the state's high school reform efforts. Their recommendations live within these pages. I hope you will use this guide to work collaboratively within your schools and communities to bring the Twelve Principles to life. Vermont's youth deserve nothing less.

Best Wishes,

Michele Forman

2001 Vermont and National Teacher of the Year

# Table of Contents

Letter from the Commissioner .....	i
Acknowledgment from the State Board of Education .....	ii
Letter from the 2001 Vermont and National Teacher of the Year .....	iii
Executive Summary .....	iv
<b>Chapter 1:</b> A Call to Action: Renewing Vermont’s Commitment to Quality Secondary Education .....	1
<b>Chapter 2:</b> Twelve Principles for High School Renewal .....	5
Figure 1: Principles and Venn Diagram	
<b>Chapter 3:</b> Current Realities: Secondary Education, Schools and Communities . . .	21
<b>Chapter 4:</b> Effective Practices for Initiating Change .....	29
<b>Chapter 5:</b> Practices to Consider Phasing Out .....	41
<b>Chapter 6:</b> Conclusion .....	53
<b>Appendices</b> .....	
<b>A:</b> Examples of Effective Practices .....	57
<b>B:</b> Assessment Rubric for the Twelve Principles .....	63
<b>C:</b> Cross Reference Table of the Twelve Principles, NEASC Standards and Vermont’s <i>School Quality Standards</i> .....	69
<b>D:</b> School and Student Performance Data .....	77
<b>E:</b> How to Use This Document for Community Dialogue .....	81
<b>F:</b> Kids Speak: Organizing a Fishbowl Session .....	87
<b>G:</b> We Believe: Recommendations and Challenges from the Vermont High School Task Force .....	91
<b>H:</b> High School Task Force Members .....	95
<b>I:</b> Glossary of Terms .....	97
<b>Bibliography</b> .....	101

## Executive Summary



Charged in 1999 by the State Board of Education and the State Department of Education to recommend strategies for reforming secondary education, the Vermont High School Task Force has produced this report, *High Schools on the Move: Renewing Vermont's Commitment to Quality Secondary Education (HSOM)*. This report reviews the current situation in Vermont high schools in light of recent research, literature and national trends and proposes Twelve Principles to improve high school learning across the state. These Twelve Principles place individual student learning at the center of the renewal process and focus community efforts on ensuring that each high school student and each high school meets the high expectations described in *Vermont's Framework of Standards and Learning Opportunities*. The Principles also support New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) high school accreditation standards and Vermont's *School Quality Standards*.

*High Schools on the Move* does not recommend that Vermont schools apply a uniform blueprint to secondary school renewal; each high school serves in a unique setting. Instead, the report recommends that schools begin by adapting existing programs and aiming their action plans toward the Twelve Principles. The report urges high schools to include entire communities in changing the secondary school experience. By engaging families, teachers, human service agencies, businesses, colleges, elementary and middle schools in helping individual students pursue their personal aspirations and meet high standards, a high school can help develop opportunities for learning throughout the community. *HSOM* asserts that the purpose of high school should be to prepare each student to use learning to forge a unique pathway into adulthood and improve the quality of life in Vermont.

While consistent with recent reform efforts, the Twelve Principles would transform high school education as we know it. *HSOM* recommends that each student develops a personal learning plan (PLP) for all four high school years; that both academic courses and a wide array of community-based learning opportunities help each student carry out those plans; and that each student accumulates a portfolio of his or her work from many sources to demonstrate how he or she has met standards. Additionally, students should exhibit their portfolios to their communities as they approach graduation. Engaging teachers, advisors, community mentors, family members and other adults in developing and assessing PLPs and portfolios would make high school renewal a community enterprise. Reports from statewide tests will help communities monitor and adjust their plans to ensure that learning occurs equitably within the community.

Developing strategies for a change effort of this size will require time, money and statewide commitment as well as ongoing dialogue among all participants sustained over a long period of time. *HSOM* recommends that:

- The State Board of Education begins a statewide dialogue about using the Twelve Principles to revise planning, governance, funding and oversight of secondary learning

- The Vermont Department of Education works collaboratively with partners to develop a Center for High School Renewal and Innovation to guide and fund high school renewal across the state and to provide support through regional partnerships and local development initiatives
- Secondary schools form affiliated networks to develop and exchange working strategies that fulfill the Twelve Principles
- Teachers revise their courses so students use learning to direct their own lives and to accumulate evidence of how they have achieved Vermont's standards
- All secondary school students begin to use high school learning to pursue their hopes, develop their talents and show others how they have prepared to engage in their communities as adults



## In This Report

### Chapter 1:

**A Call to Action: Renewing Vermont's Commitment to Quality Secondary Education** reviews the Task Force's work and outlines the need for high school renewal.

### Chapter 2:

**Twelve Principles for High School Renewal** explains the Twelve Principles along with suggested methods for implementation and likely outcomes.

### Chapter 3:

**Current Realities: Secondary Education, Schools and Communities** presents data and conclusions regarding Vermont's schools, particularly attributes of high schools.

### Chapter 4:

**Effective Practices for Initiating Change** reviews strategies for implementing the Twelve Principles along with practices that will promote systemic change in our high schools.

### Chapter 5:

**Practices to Consider Phasing Out** reviews policies and practices that inhibit systemic high school reform and suggests alternate actions.

### Chapter 6:

**Conclusion**

### Appendices

The appendices included in this report are intended to provide additional information and tools to help schools and communities begin engaging in dialogue about high school renewal.





# A Call to Action: Renewing Vermont's Commitment to Quality Secondary Education

*"We have learned that we cannot mandate  
what matters to effective practice;  
the challenge lies in understanding how policy  
can enable and facilitate it."*

Milbrey McLaughlin, as cited in  
*Dynamics of Change in High School Teaching:  
A Study of Innovation in Five Professional  
Development Schools*



In 1999, the State Board of Education charged the Vermont Department of Education with the task of identifying critical issues facing Vermont high schools as they organized "secondary schools" to better prepare young people to meet the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Former Education Commissioner Marc Hull and former Deputy Commissioner Marge Petit then formed the High School Task Force, challenging a group of educators and community leaders to assess the current situation in our high schools and recommend changes that would improve learning for all Vermont high school students. Over the next two years, Task Force members reviewed national and international literature on high school reform and renewal. We also attended national conferences and consulted with educators from around the country who also are engaged in high school renewal; we studied the current state of affairs in Vermont secondary schools. In *High Schools on the Move*, we have proposed a set of recommendations that may guide high school reform efforts over the next several years.

As the Task Force began its work, members realized the importance of establishing a clear sense of the current reality in Vermont high schools and their communities. While we can report that we found much to celebrate, we concluded that our secondary education system cries out for attention. In general, more students than ever are graduating from high school and more are going on to some form of post-secondary education. However, many high schools have become impersonal institutions where individual dreams and talents easily are lost as students struggle to meet uniform curriculum requirements and accumulate Carnegie units. As a result, students with college aspirations focus their energies myopically on achieving competitive grades and test scores while students without clear college aspirations drift through four years of high school without an organizing purpose. During our discussions of research and current theory, the need for substantive change in Vermont secondary education became abundantly clear.



In this report, we have concluded that programs narrowly designed to suit only one traditional pathway cannot engage all students in developing their full potentials or help them realize their personal dreams. Narrowly defined pathways hinder the development of students who attend classes without meaningful, personal investment or engagement in creating their own futures. Twenty percent of Vermont high school freshman do not graduate in four years. They drop out disenchanted and face greatly diminished prospects as members of their communities. Many students who go on to post-secondary education change their majors several times; half do not graduate from college within six years. The economic and the emotional impacts of lost opportunities can be devastating for individual students and their families as well as the state as a whole.

We can no longer expect high schools to prepare 21<sup>st</sup>-century students for adult life by sealing them off from the challenges they will face as active members of their communities. We need to encourage our young people to use the impressive educational and natural resources available in Vermont communities to clarify their aspirations and develop the academic skills and knowledge they will need to fulfill their hopes. The research is clear: young adults need broad background knowledge that strengthens engagement in community affairs - in work, service, artistic expression and higher learning. We believe that a high school education should help students use their learning to manage and direct their own lives, inspiring them as well to join others to improve life within their communities.

## Personalized high school learning

The High School Task Force identified Twelve Principles as a guide for high school renewal and innovation in Vermont. Progress toward the Twelve Principles is already well under way, developed incrementally over the past 20 years by high school students, teachers, administrators and community members working to improve the “fit” between individual students and school programs. The instances of effective practice cited here demonstrate that the Principles can be applied to a wide range of conditions within Vermont’s communities; they also indicate that the whole range of effective school practices have not yet been developed in any single high school. *High Schools on the Move’s* sustainable, systemwide change recognizes the difficulties we will face and simultaneously infuses hope for what we can achieve by working together.

We believe that Vermont high schools can become places where all students are deeply cared for, where they actively choose among many different pathways toward adult engagement and where they learn to meet the high standards outlined in *Vermont’s Framework of Standards and Learning Opportunities*. As generally expressed in Vermont’s Vital Results, each graduate of a Vermont high school should have demonstrated readiness to assume adult roles in the community:

- Gathering information and communicating their understanding in a wide variety of media
- Using knowledge to meet the challenges of life in a complex democratic society

- Assuming responsibility for their own decisions and actions
- Working cooperatively with others in the community to solve problems
- Assembling essential knowledge and practicing the flexible skills that support a lifetime of learning

As reflected in Vermont's Fields of Knowledge, the information needed to solve complex problems in an expanding community must come from multiple sources—arts, languages, literature, history, social sciences, mathematics, science and technology.

We have concluded that there is simply no uniform or right way to get all students engaged in learning. The Twelve Principles are designed to encourage wide ranging exploration of the many ways to explore personalized learning, fulfilling individual goals while meeting common standards. Five years from now, the high school experience will be organized to confront challenges in the adult world, helping students with different talents and aspirations use information to solve the problems they will face after graduation. Working with a team that includes parents, teachers and community mentors, each student can develop:

- A personal learning plan (PLP) describing the pathway he or she has selected with his or her parent(s) to accomplish goals that become increasingly clear as the student gathers knowledge and experience
- A portfolio expressing the talents, skills and knowledge he or she has gathered in meeting Vermont's standards
- Community exhibitions at which he or she demonstrates what he or she knows and how that knowledge fits future plans
- Standards-based transcripts that track his or her progress toward personal goals and common expectations

Rather than walled enclaves protecting young adults from the world they will govern, the high school can become a wheel with a solid hub, connecting students to learning opportunities in their communities.

Developing PLPs and assembling portfolios of evidence showing readiness for the adult world will require that all students have access to teachers who understand how content knowledge relates to student goals, and who:

- Understand their content well enough to forge connections between student aspirations and learning opportunities in their communities
- Understand learning styles and learning theories that explain individual differences
- Understand how the learning process changes with age, experience and growing expertise
- Create opportunities for students to interact with caring adults and peers
- Design learning experiences relevant and applicable to adult challenges
- Possess the instructional expertise needed to fit learning activities to different student talents and interests
- Practice a variety of techniques to engage different students in learning





We recognize that for many high school teachers, seeing content areas as ways to understand how the world works may require several years of collaborative exploration and experimentation.

### **Calling Vermonters to collective action**

Personalizing high school learning may force us to re-invent most of the structures that currently define the high school experience. After more than 100 years of providing comprehensive exposure to knowledge for all students, the high school experience cannot be personalized through a series of minor adjustments. In fact, the system itself consists of interlocking elements that combine to restrict growth. Schedules, requirements, subject areas, credits, faculty roles, tracks, tests and rules have become a Gordian knot, an interconnected complex of practices that makes the high school experience impersonal and unresponsive to individual needs and talents. Changing any component of the high school experience requires changing the whole structure; changing the whole structure depends on communities being ready to support change over an extended period of time. We firmly believe that the time to begin is now.

## Chapter 2

# Twelve Principles for High School Renewal

At an important turning point in our study, the High School Task Force agreed upon a comprehensive vision that makes student learning and performance the organizing principle for our endeavors.

We reached consensus on a set of principles that were common across longitudinal studies of effectiveness and other reports. We believe the adoption of the Twelve Principles will improve student performance in Vermont's high schools.

We recognize that the Principles are not immutable; they will evolve as we continue to work for congruence between the vision they embody and the many requirements and demands that already challenge our schools and school districts.

In this chapter, the Task Force lists a few of the practices that embody each Principle. Many of the practices, it should be noted, embody several Principles, and not all practices that support a Principle have been listed. Appendix B outlines a rubric designed to help schools and communities communicate and assess progress toward the Twelve Principles in their own schools. Appendix C relates the Twelve Principles to New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC ) standards and Vermont's *School Quality Standards*.

## **The Task Force urges educators, families, students, citizens and policy-makers to:**

- Embrace these Principles
- Assess high schools in relation to the Principles
- Join a statewide dialogue on how we can broaden support for the Principles
- Strive together for the renewal of our schools centered on the vision the Principles represent





# Twelve Principles for High School Renewal in Vermont

- 1 Engaged Learners**  
Students are engaged learners who are responsible for and actively involved in their own learning.
- 2 Challenging Standards**  
Each student is expected to demonstrate that he or she has met challenging standards based on *Vermont's Framework of Standards and Learning Opportunities* or national standards.
- 3 Multiple Pathways**  
High schools provide each student with a variety of learning opportunities and multiple pathways to meet graduation requirements.
- 4 Personalized Learning**  
High schools create small, personalized and safe learning environments that provide students with stable support from adults, caring connections to mentors and a sense of belonging.
- 5 Flexible Structures**  
High school schedules and organizations are flexible to allow time for varied instructional activities and to provide an integrated learning experience. Learning is the constant; time is the variable.
- 6 Real-Life Experiences**  
Students learn about careers and college opportunities through real-life experiences and adult interaction, including work-based learning, service learning, career exploration, job shadowing and career academies.
- 7 Instructional Leadership**  
Adults in the school use research-based practices and effective administrative and instructional strategies to support increased student performance.
- 8 Alignment**  
Supported by research-based professional development, high schools align their curricula, instruction and assessment with Vermont's *School Quality Standards*.
- 9 Shared Purpose**  
Every high school adopts and publicizes a compelling vision and mission that uses a results-oriented approach to promote continuous improvement.

**Organization of Principles  
Guiding High School  
Renewal**



**10**

**Pre-K-16 Continuity**

Every high school is a member of a pre-K-16 education system and is a partner with middle schools, colleges and post-graduation training programs to help students make successful transitions.

**11**

**Family Participation**

Families are active participants in their young adults' education and have varied opportunities to volunteer, serve on decision-making groups, assist students in setting learning goals, monitor results and support learning at home.

**12**

**Community Partnerships**

Every high school forms active partnerships with families, community members, business people, civic leaders and policy-makers to ensure fiscal support and to expand student learning opportunities.

**“When a pupil asks ‘What am I doing here?’ we need to know that she wants to propose her own answers to that question, whether or not the larger system is attentive or responsive. And if we listen and respond, a new energy source for school reform can be triggered by our response: ‘What are you personally planning to do?’ ”**

David Gibson with John Clarke,  
*Growing Toward Systemic Change:  
Developing Personal Learning Plans  
at Montpelier High School*

## Principle 1: Engaged Learners

**Students are engaged learners who are responsible for and actively involved in their own learning.**

### Rationale

The purpose of high school is not to prepare students for a particular adult role. Instead, schools should help students explore their interests and aspirations and understand their career opportunities and the value of learning. The high school experience should expand from the classroom into the community to demonstrate real-world applications of knowledge. It should aid students in maturing and in learning how to make informed, well-reasoned choices. Students should acquire knowledge and learn how to use that information to solve the problems in life and work.

Our common purpose should be to develop high schools where students graduate ready to take on active roles as adults in their communities. Our central focus should be to allow students to develop their roles by actively engaging them in the workplace, community, post-secondary institutions and electronic networks as well as in the classroom. The way schools are organized and the way classrooms engage students should be centered on student needs and involving students in their own education.

### This Principle is embodied in these effective practices:

- Student participation in setting learning goals
- Using teaching strategies (e.g., metacognition, reflection) that adapt to different learning styles
- Personalized learning, personal learning plans and portfolios
- Graduation challenge/capstone programs



## Principle 2: Challenging Standards

Each student is expected to demonstrate that he or she has met challenging standards based on *Vermont's Framework of Standards and Learning Opportunities* or national standards.

### Rationale

Engaging students in the direction of their own learning process begins with a clear statement of the expected performance against common standards. Instead of requiring the accumulation of credits in particular subject areas, these performance standards should be relevant to the acquisition of skills and knowledge sufficient to succeed in adult life.

### This Principle is embodied in these effective practices:

- Making use of Vermont's *School Quality Standards* and adopting standards-based graduation requirements
- Expanding Advanced Placement (AP) programs and raising standards for special needs students
- Increasing the level and challenge of required course sequences
- Eliminating low-level courses and the non-college track
- Teaching reading and writing across the curriculum
- Expanding dual enrollment opportunities

**“In numerous surveys, high school students have expressed their belief that their future success in the job market depends only on whether they graduate, not on their grades or what they learn.”**

Laurence Steinberg, *Beyond the Classroom: Why School Reform has Failed and What Parents Need to Do*.



## Principle 3: Multiple Pathways

**High schools provide each student with a variety of learning opportunities and multiple pathways to meet graduation requirements.**

### Rationale

Each student has a unique learning style. Students who spoke with the Task Force emphasized this point and asked that high schools stop putting arbitrary barriers in the way of their natural desires and interests in learning. While most young people understand the need to demonstrate mastery of a core set of competencies, they want to pursue their own investigation of learning, not a prescribed regimen of unrelated classes that are established by rules, requirements and traditions.

Students also asked for learning experiences that connect classroom knowledge to life experiences, acknowledging that their own pathways through life will require individualized preparation. They pointed out that the current disconnect between learning and real life often explains why an academic record is not a complete measure of a student's aspirations and potential. Nationwide studies affirm what our students are telling us: students have diverse learning styles, skills and attitudes. Working with these differences will produce better results than trying to re-work them.

### This Principle is embodied in these effective practices:

- Developing career academies, applied academics and career exploration opportunities in school
- Expanding and integrating community- and work-based learning opportunities
- Using multiple measures to assess achievement of standards
- Aligning high school standards-based transcripts and post-secondary admission requirements
- Adopting dual enrollment agreements with higher education institutions
- Establishing graduation challenge/capstone programs as culminating projects
- Developing working relationships between sending high schools and technical education centers

## Principle 4: Personalized Learning

**High schools create small, personalized and safe learning environments that provide students with stable support from adults, caring connections to mentors and a sense of belonging.**

### Rationale

Students learn best when they are in a physically, emotionally and intellectually safe and respectful environment. Personalized learning respects the diversity of students' cultural backgrounds, talents, interests and aspirations. Students face a world full of risks that only increase after graduation. To prepare students for their adult roles, high school must provide safe, supportive and encouraging environments allowing them to take risks, make mistakes and try again. Students need to be respected for who they are and what matters to them. They need to learn the importance of providing that same respect to others as they assume the mantle of adult citizenship.

High schools that have adopted a model of personalized learning in smaller learning environments are documenting improved student outcomes. When learning environments are smaller and more intimate, teachers and students can more easily get acquainted; teachers can spend more time with individual students; and students seem to benefit from the sense of belonging to a community. Whether this is the result of smaller groupings or other reforms related to smaller grouping currently is unknown, but there is little doubt about the contribution of small learning communities to improved outcomes.

### This Principle is embodied in these effective practices:

- Developing freshman academies and transition programs to adult life
- Organizing adult mentoring for all students
- Exploring school-within-a-school, house or other smaller learning community configurations
- Designing a comprehensive educational support system to assist each student

**“...practices that do appear to make a difference, such as raising academic standards and giving students plenty of one-on-one support, are most easily realized in smaller cohesive groups.”**

U.S. Department of Education,  
*Aiming High*

## Principle 5: Flexible Structures

**High school schedules and organizations are flexible to allow time for varied instructional activities and to provide an integrated learning experience. Learning is the constant; time is the variable.**

### Rationale

The establishment of flexible structures is one of the most consistent recommendations the Task Force found in major research on high school reform. When school structures are flexible, the concept of the school day and the walls of the school no longer limit educational opportunities.

One flexible model that many Vermont high schools are now implementing is block scheduling, a school-day format of longer but fewer classes. Because teachers and students have more time in each class and fewer classes per day, interaction increases, potential subject matter for courses expands and innovative teaching methods are enabled. Increasing evidence shows that learning improves, teacher satisfaction and student attendance increase and more innovative coursework can be incorporated into the curriculum.

Flexible structures can be the building block for other aspects of school renewal. Personalizing learning, enhancing opportunities for professional development, encouraging curriculum innovation and providing students with work- and community-based learning opportunities all depend on flexibility in scheduling when and where learning happens.

### This Principle is embodied in these effective practices:

- Exploring a.m./p.m. structures: mornings for class instruction, afternoons for work- and community-based learning, extracurricular activities, professional development and integrated team planning
- Providing professional development opportunities and support to help faculty adapt to changes in scheduling
- Creating credit for personalized learning opportunities, such as travel-based learning, learning through internships and online learning
- Designing collaboratives among high schools and between high schools and technical education centers whether onsite, online or via distance learning
- Applying alternative systems for grouping students (not just by grade or age)



## Principle 6: Real-Life Experiences

**Students learn about careers and college opportunities through real-life experiences and adult interaction, including work-based learning, service learning, job shadowing, career exploration and career academies.**

### Rationale

Learning, like work, is a lifelong engagement. Prior to the Industrial Revolution, however, most formal education was directly related to community- and work-based activities. Young people learned by watching and working alongside their parents or through apprenticeships with master artisans. With the onset of the Industrial Revolution, educational systems began to separate work from learning.

Over time, the gap has grown between education and the work world. Concepts learned in the classroom have little real-world significance for many students because, in many cases, the classroom isn't connected to the world outside the school. Education cannot be delivered solely from textbooks and lectures; it must also include practical, hands-on experiences that challenge students to apply what they have learned in the classroom. Community- and work-based learning re-establish the connection between the classroom and the rest of the world by providing a bridge between theory and practice. Moreover, changes in the workplace emphasize the need for more highly skilled people whose training includes practical work experience.

### This Principle is embodied in these effective practices:

- Establishing internships, apprenticeships, career exploration, community service and work-based learning opportunities
- Designing graduation challenge/capstone programs with culminating exhibitions
- Using multiple measures to assess achievement of standards
- Developing strong partnerships between businesses and schools
- Alloting flexible blocks of time for instruction
- Building mentoring programs that link students to community advocates and other adults

**“When students without community-based learning experience walk downtown to and from school, they look at buildings and do not know what goes on inside. Their learning is at the school. With internships, students are put into the buildings. They learn what makes a community and they gain an increased sense of belonging.”**

Vermont high school teacher

**“Teachers must teach to higher standards and help students achieve a deeper understanding of content. They must help all students, of all abilities and from all backgrounds, achieve high standards. Given this challenge, we need to establish an effective professional development system that helps teachers increase their content knowledge, gain necessary teaching skills and revise their school and classroom curriculum.”**

Vermont Department of Education,  
*Recommendations to Establish a  
Statewide System of Educator  
Preparation and Professional  
Development*

## Principle 7: Instructional Leadership

**Adults in the school use research-based practices and effective administrative and instructional strategies to support increased student performance.**

### Rationale

Even if a high school’s leadership and faculty are fully committed to the Twelve Principles, revitalization of a school’s performance will depend on building, supplementing and supporting teachers with rigorous and effective professional development and improved administrative leadership and by removing obstacles to change. As noted by the Maine Commission on Secondary Education in *Promising Futures*:

The current teacher’s work life stems from a time when teachers were assumed to have “learned their field” in college and students were expected to “learn what the teacher knows.” The knowledge explosion and our increasingly sophisticated understanding of teens and their learning make this job definition harmfully obsolete. They will need to devise individualized learning activities for students, and their own knowledge and skills will need to expand in order to match the ever-widening variety of learning and teaching challenges presented by students. (34)

The most effective professional development is job-embedded, built into the very job of teaching. Research on effective professional development has pointed to a need for leadership in devising and implementing new models for developing skills in our teachers. Teachers lead their own professional development in these models, which are based on self-assessment and involvement in objective goal setting, design and execution. Administrative leadership skills include building continuous and ongoing community support for effective professional development. Difficulty in recruiting and retaining qualified teachers and administrators is an additional challenge for effective, consistent educational leadership.

**This Principle is embodied in these effective practices:**

- Supporting peer evaluation and conferencing over student work
- Preparing school leaders to focus on peer support and curriculum improvements, not just evaluation
- Using research-based models for professional development that fit professional challenges
- Using in-service time for faculty to collaboratively develop schoolwide professional development plans for each year, aligned with the school action plan
- Aligning individual professional development plans with the school action plan
- Supporting national certification opportunities for teachers
- Building business/education partnerships that provide teacher internships and opportunities for collaboration on curriculum development and teaching



---

**“Vermont’s *Framework* helps to establish world-class standards that schools and communities need to address. To assure a successful future, Vermont students must have access to a quality education that enables them to perform as competent, productive and engaged members of the workforce and society.”**

Vermont Business Roundtable,  
*From High School to Workplace*

---

## Principle 8: Alignment

**Supported by research-based professional development, high schools aligns their curricula, instruction and assessment with Vermont’s *School Quality Standards*.**

### Rationale

As the introduction to *Vermont’s Framework of Standards and Learning Opportunities* states, “these standards provide practical, useful reference points for the development of local curriculum and assessment. They are intended as points of reference, not limitations. Many students will accomplish much more than these standards envision; yet the standards set the targets for what all students should be challenged, encouraged and expected to achieve.”

Most high schools have already begun the process of aligning local curriculum with the *Framework*. A few have even begun developing graduation requirements based on achievement of standards, not just completion of credits. These are important changes as they establish both a new set of expectations for students and teachers and promote better outcomes from our education process. The standards make expectations for their performance clear to all students so they can understand what they need to learn and be able to do.

The *School Quality Standards* require all Vermont high schools to establish a process to ensure that graduating students can demonstrate achievement and mastery of *Vermont’s Framework of Standards and Learning Opportunities*, including the Fields of Knowledge and the Vital Results, by 2005. Alignment of curriculum with the *Framework’s* standards is essential for fulfillment of the spirit and letter of the standards-based graduation requirement.

### This Principle is embodied in these effective practices:

- Conducting curriculum mapping to determine alignment with standards
- Developing standards-based units of study
- Using multiple measures to assess achievement of standards
- Developing standards-based portfolios to catalogue student performance related to standards
- Providing the support and means for faculty to develop the skills necessary to assist student mastery of *Vermont’s Framework of Standards and Learning Opportunities*



## Principle 9: Shared Purpose

**Every high school adopts and publicizes a compelling vision and mission that use a results-oriented approach to promote continuous improvement.**

### Rationale

Because so many stakeholders are involved in the success of our high schools, it is essential that schools devise, adopt and publicize a shared vision and mission developed through a collaborative and consultative process. Families, students, teachers, employers, social services, community organizations and other schools all should understand the school's mission and their own responsibilities and contributions.

### This Principle is embodied in these effective practices:

- Holding community forums to develop a shared purpose
- Incorporating post-secondary data (e.g., post-secondary enrollment and completion, student surveys and employment after graduation) into pre-K-12 assessment and using longitudinal outcomes research in action planning
- Using multiple measures to assess achievement of standards
- Developing strong partnerships between business, government and service agencies and schools
- Improving relationships between sending high schools and technical education centers

**“The boundaries separating members of the education system—learners, teachers, family and community members—can easily suppress change. However, when a common vision supports systemic resonance, the boundaries flex and allow people to come into dialogue and synchronize in unexpected ways.”**

David Gibson and John Clarke,  
*Growing Toward Systemic Change:  
Developing Personal Learning Plans at  
Montpelier High School*

**“High schools can most effectively enact meaningful changes through the support of and coordination with post-secondary systems and sending middle schools.”**

Vermont High School Task Force

## **Principle 10: Pre-K-16 Continuity**

**Every high school is a member of a pre-K-16 education system and is a partner with middle schools, colleges and post-graduation training programs to help students make successful transitions.**

### **Rationale**

A strong pre-K-16 structure, linked by common goals and reform strategies, is critical to high school renewal. With the State Board of Education’s adoption of the Common Core of Learning in August 1993, Vermont recognized that the entire education system has a responsibility to provide all students with the means to master commonly defined, broad areas of knowledge and skills. Each step of the education continuum provides age-appropriate learning opportunities that are aligned with the state’s standards, with the shared goal of preparing each student for adult life. Alignment of learning experiences for students pre-K-16 is possible and it is necessary. To that end, high schools should:

- Develop partnerships to support success across systems, to answer questions like: How well are our high school graduates doing in college—not only college admission but college completion? Is every high school graduate college and/or work-ready?
- Clarify expectations for college and work success. Research tells us that the quality and intensity of the high school curriculum is the most important predictor of college completion.
- Focus professional development and instructional strategies on meeting the needs of each student and reducing secondary and post-secondary performance and aspiration gaps among groups of students.
- Continue building partnerships with post-secondary institutions to align standards-based transcripts with admission criteria.

### **This Principle is embodied in these effective practices:**

- Positioning the high school as hub of a comprehensive, community learning network that includes other schools, internships, work-based learning, home schooling and enrollment in college classes
- Establishing transition and orientation programs along the pre-K-16 continuum
- Developing pre-K-12 consultation structures
- Designing capstone projects that span several grades
- Aligning high school standards-based transcripts with post-secondary admission requirements
- Establishing mentoring relationships that support student progress

## Principle 11: Family Participation

**Families are active participants in their young adults' education and have varied opportunities to volunteer, serve on decision-making groups, assist students in setting learning goals, monitor results and support learning at home.**

### Rationale

Academic performance improves when families are involved in their children's educations. Blended families, single-parent families, two-wage-earner households, the demands of other children on the family—all of these make it a challenge to engage families in the school. Yet, the effort must be made. Families are an essential part of a student's support and nurturing, and schools cannot—nor should they—fulfill all needs of our youth. Preparing well-rounded, well-adjusted youth is a 24-hour a day job, and families must participate as partners with schools.

Moreover, families have an important role in creating and continuously improving the mission of the school itself. A school is most likely to be successful when the vision is collaboratively developed and when accountability is shared among students, educators, families and the community.

### This Principle is embodied in these effective practices:

- Ensuing family input in student goal-setting and monitoring and in developing personalized learning plans
- Involving parents in school action planning and school leadership teams
- Scheduling “first day” events to begin the school year and a mid-year school report night to discuss school progress
- Establishing closer collaboration with home schooling families
- Engaging family participation in education to model lifelong learning
- Scheduling adequate, mutually convenient times for families and educators to meet
- Defining reasonable caseloads and flexible work days for guidance counselors to enable them to support increased interaction with families
- Scheduling regular parent/student/school forums to share ideas
- Integrating the goals of parent organizations into the school action plan
- Developing home/school compacts to guide a shared effort toward student learning

**“Overall, 49 percent of students reported that their parents talked with them daily about school and 27 percent talked with them once or twice a week. Eighteen percent of students reported that their parents never talk with them about school and 7 percent reported that their parents talk with them less than once a month.”**

Vermont Department of Health,  
2001 *Vermont Youth Risk Behavior Survey*

**“We believe that one of the most promising strategies for helping young people improve academic achievement and labor market connections is to strengthen the links between local employers and schools.”**

Committee for Economic Development, *The Employer's Role in Linking School and Work*

## Principle 12: Community Partnerships

**Every high school forms active partnerships with community members, business people, civic leaders and policy-makers to ensure fiscal support and to expand student learning opportunities.**

### Rationale

Building community alliances is one of the key reform strategies identified by the New American High Schools program in a literature overview published by the U.S. Department of Education in 1999:

In order to prepare students for the many challenges they face, schools are learning to reach out to their local stakeholders to take full advantage of the resources available to them. Partnerships with employers, linkages with social service and other community organizations, and deeper bonds with family and teachers all benefit students. Although schools cannot lose sight of their primary mission and responsibilities—that of educating youth for productive lives—their capacity to do so can be substantially enhanced with the help of others. Partnerships with community-based organizations can alleviate the need for schools to address their students’ legal, medical, and financial issues single-handedly, while employers can help design curricula, serve on advisory councils, provide work-based learning activities, and serve as mentors. All of these relationships translate, in varying degrees, to improved student attitudes toward and engagement in school, better grades, higher graduation rates, enrollment in postsecondary education, and a host of other positive outcomes. (92)

### This Principle is embodied in these effective practices:

- Positioning schools as the hub of a comprehensive, community, lifelong learning network and offering teachers and students work-based learning opportunities with employers and social service organizations
- Developing strong business/education partnerships
- Designing graduation challenge/capstone programs
- Offering community service learning opportunities and inviting community members to serve on capstone or graduation challenge review panels
- Using mentors to better guide students toward their aspirations and goals

# Current Realities: Secondary Education, Schools and Communities

The Task Force believes that we can best chart our future course if we start by assessing the current realities in our high schools and communities. Collected between 1997 and 2001, statistics cited in this chapter may provide a general sketch of high school learning during that period.

There are significant variations in size, capacity and student demographics among secondary schools in Vermont. There also are variations in what communities can contribute to their schools, financially or through engagement with the community. Variations are so great, in fact, that the use of state averages is almost meaningless. One might say, “When you’ve seen one Vermont high school, you’ve seen one Vermont high school.”

What follows are some of the salient data about the state’s current system of secondary education. We acknowledge that this is not an exhaustive analysis. Many data we hoped to find were not available, but we believe that this compilation provides an important snapshot of where we are as we begin designing strategies for high school renewal.

These statistics come from published sources, state documents and interviews with individuals working throughout the educational system and are listed in the bibliography.

## Observations on our System and Student Population

### Structure

In 1999, about 47,000 Vermont youth were receiving secondary education in 59 secondary school districts:

- Seven school districts had high schools serving grades 9 to 12
- Seventeen schools were serving grades 7 to 12
- Two schools were serving grades 5 to 12
- Twenty-four school districts had K-12 programs
- Nine school districts had pre-K-12 programs
- Fifteen career and technical education centers serve secondary students and adult learners





## Size

Most high schools serve a single school district, which, theoretically, makes it easier to ensure alignment from pre-K through grade 12. Yet, 24 of the 59 public secondary schools are supervisory union (SU) high schools. These 24 secondary schools are at the receiving end of a funnel with students from as many as a dozen elementary and middle sending schools located in two or more school districts.

While the high schools tend to be larger, they vary greatly in size. According to 1999 data:

- Fourteen schools had enrollments of less than 750
- Four schools had enrollments between 750 and 1,000
- Six schools had enrollments that exceeds 1,000

There is an even wider range of enrollment among the single-district high schools. Enrollment ranges from 90 grade 9 to 12 students in Concord's combined elementary/secondary school to 1,485 at the Essex High School, a 9 to 12, single-district high school. Nearly half of all Vermont secondary schools serve fewer than 600 students—an attribute that many researchers and educators now consider a strength.

## Enrollment trends

Communities are challenged to match facility capacity with projected enrollment. Peak secondary enrollment occurred during FY80 with 49,309 students from both public schools and independent secondary schools acting as public schools. A decline in the public secondary enrollment took place between FY81 to FY91, while secondary numbers from the five independent secondary schools acting as public schools remained relatively consistent at around 3,000 students. From FY91 to FY02, secondary enrollment has been increasing at a compounded annual growth rate (CAGR) of 1.37 percent. In FY02, secondary enrollment increased by 0.63 percent (26 students) from FY01.

## Number of teachers

Only limited aggregate data describe teacher supply and demand in Vermont. Data on the number of teachers in a district are submitted to the state with school budgets, but these totals do not identify the grades in which teachers work. The Vermont Department of Education reports a total of 8,741 teachers in FY02 in pre-K-12, one-third of whom teach in high schools.

## Demographics

Most data on the demographics of Vermont's student population are reported only in aggregate form, blurring the variations known to exist between regions. Further, secondary student information is not always reported separately from district data. The Task Force recognizes that each district will face unique challenges based on the demographics of its own high school student population:

- The percentage of minorities enrolled in all K-12 schools in FY00 was 3.16; this number has grown during the past decade.
- According to *Education Week*, 13.5 percent of Vermont's K-12 students are living in poverty, and 11.4 percent of K-12 students have disabilities.
- Alternative programs in 81 secondary schools serve about 1,500 students, or 3 percent of all students; 920 students from 74 secondary schools, or 2 percent of all students, have individual education plans (IEPs).



## Other Attributes of Our High Schools

### Governance

Secondary school governance is decentralized and diffuse. The numbers of boards and individuals with decision-making roles in our high schools include:

- Secondary school students: 47,000
- School boards with high schools: 60
- School board members: 451
- Superintendents: 60
- Principals: 59

In Vermont, there is one school board member per 104 secondary students.

### Schedule and organization of classes

While data are not available statewide, it is believed that most secondary schools still organize their curricula by subjects and Carnegie units, track students by ability and future plans and follow a traditional school day of 45-minute to 50-minute class periods.

On the other hand, course schedules for the 30 percent of 11<sup>th</sup>- and 12<sup>th</sup>- grade students enrolled in technical education center programs follow students' career curricula. Courses are embedded in half-day or full-day programs and may incorporate applied mathematics and other traditional subjects.

### Advanced courses

Eighty-eight percent of Vermont's public schools offered Advanced Placement (AP) courses in the 1999-2000 school year compared to 57.3 percent nationally.

**“School is different than when you attended. There are things you can’t understand.”**

Vermont high school student

## Technical education

About 4,800 Vermont resident students were enrolled part time or full time in technical education programs in the 2001-2002 school year. The programs were provided by both technical education centers and comprehensive high schools. About 130 of these students were adults with or without diploma, while the remainder were currently enrolled in a public high school, public-private academy, independent high school or were home schooled.

## Dual enrollment

Dual enrollment allows students to earn credits toward graduation and college degrees simultaneously. Opportunities are available in some parts of the state for high school students to enroll in the Community College of Vermont (CCV), the University of Vermont (UVM) or the Vermont State Colleges system. A program at UVM offers high school students reduced tuition on selected courses during the summer session. A special scholarship-funded course at UVM, “Poe’s Children,” is offered to area high schools students. A Middlebury College program offers certain courses to qualified students as a community service.

The cost of dual enrollment varies widely. Some programs at Vermont Technical College and certain courses at Middlebury College are free. In other cases, tuition costs are shared equally by the high school, the college and the student. Some courses at Johnson State College and CCV are provided at reduced fees, while regular school-year courses at UVM are available only at full tuition. Decisions about credit equivalencies vary and are part of the local articulation agreements often based on Carnegie units rather than mastery of learning standards.

## Work- and community-based learning and community service learning

Expanded learning opportunities have been made available in many secondary schools as a result of the School-to-Work initiative, which was carried out through 14 regional business/education partnerships between 1995 and 2000. According to data from the partnerships, applied academics have been integrated into curriculum in 48 percent of schools. Career exploration programs are available in 60 percent of secondary schools. Capstone projects (in-depth personal learning experiences incorporating research, work-based and community-based and service learning) are either elective or required in 46 percent of secondary schools. Work-based learning experience is elective or required in 65 percent of high schools. Community-based learning or community service learning is elective or required in 75 percent of high schools.



## What Can We Conclude from Our Current Realities?

Common themes that emerged during the Task Force’s two year study led us to formulate the nine observations that follow, as well as the challenges we face as we try to make the high school experience more responsive to students’ individual needs and talents. The Twelve Principles and core recommendations of this report are our response to these challenges.

**Observation 1:** Vermont schools are graduating a higher proportion of eligible students than the national average, but 20 percent of our students are not graduating with their classes. Ninety-five percent of incarcerated youth do not have high school diplomas and most dropped out in 9<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> grade.

**Challenges:** To continue to raise the proportion of students graduating and to graduate youth who are at risk or who have left school; to increase the value of a high school diploma by ensuring that all graduates can perform at skill and knowledge levels described by *Vermont’s Framework of Standards and Learning Opportunities*.

**Observation 2:** Secondary school students exhibit more varied and complex learning and social and emotional needs than in the past. In many areas of the state the student body also is becoming more culturally, racially and socioeconomically diverse.

**Challenges:** To know well and to value each student and her or his learning styles, needs and aspirations; to meet the needs of our increasingly diverse youth population who may live in communities unaccustomed to change.

**Observation 3:** Significant disparities exist in access to learning opportunities within Vermont’s secondary schools.

**Challenge:** To ensure access to personalized learning for each Vermont youth regardless of socioeconomic or cultural background, race, gender or educational history, without overtaxing the fiscal and human resources of secondary schools.

**“It would be startling if all of the graduating seniors of four Vermont high schools dropped out this year before receiving their diplomas. But that is the magnitude of what has been happening across Vermont each and every year for at least two decades.”**

The Governor’s Team on Dropout Prevention, March 1989

**“Help me to be successful. Don’t just tell me to get As.”**

Vermont high school student

**“Most students are exposed to a mass of information and take away with them only what corresponds to their personal interests.”**

Vermont high school student

**Observation 4:** Vermont has implemented a rigorous tool for statewide assessment of student performance—the New Standards Reference Exams (NSREs)—but students face no individual consequences for poor performance and many school districts are not making the best use of test results to improve student achievement of *Vermont’s Framework of Standards and Learning Opportunities*.

**Challenge:** To develop meaningful, effective and economical models for rigorous statewide assessment of student performance that recognize the unique characteristics of students and school districts while promoting mastery of *Vermont’s Framework of Standards and Learning Opportunities*.

**Observation 5:** Based on statewide assessments (the NSREs), overall student performance in the State is not satisfactory; not enough high school students are meeting or exceeding the assessment’s standards. Vermont’s *School Quality Standards* require that all high schools implement standards-based graduation requirements by 2005.

**Challenges:** To provide leadership, resources and conditions for all Vermont students, educators and parents; to give all students ample opportunities to master Vermont’s standards and achieve their own personal learning goals; to permit achievement of the goal of statewide standards-based graduation; to ensure alignment of learning goals through the pre-K-16 curriculum in each community.

**Observation 6:** Some Vermont students find secondary education irrelevant and feel disengaged from learning, a frustration often shared by their teachers.

**Challenge:** To authentically engage students, teachers and parents in learning experiences that are rigorous and that students find relevant to their current needs and future ambitions.

**Observation 7:** Some Vermont students feel disconnected from the important decisions that determine their educations, school life and futures; many parents share these feelings.

**Challenge:** To develop means through which students and their parents can make important decisions about future goals and current educational activities and can participate in shaping school procedures that significantly affect student learning.

**Observation 8:** Our secondary schools receive little feedback on how well their graduates fare after leaving high school. We neither have sufficient data to measure trends of Vermont high school student acceptance and completion rates at post-secondary institutions, nor can we compare our rates to other states'. We also are unable to evaluate the achievements of students as they navigate into adulthood.

**Challenges:** To incorporate data on post-secondary achievement into the pre-K-12 assessment system and to use that information to provide support and learning opportunities throughout the transitional years to help all Vermont high school students prepare for productive and fulfilling lives.

**Observation 9:** Vermont high schools face many challenges, including unfunded mandates, budgetary pressures, teacher shortages and societal problems. Schools also face multiple and sometimes conflicting requirements—and struggle to succeed at them all.

**Challenges:** To focus the primary resources and energies of each Vermont secondary school on learning, which is its most central mission; to refocus all school activities to serve this central mission coherently; to better explain the multiple accountability systems and requirements imposed on our schools.

---

**“We provide waivers that allow educators to teach classes outside of their majors or fields of knowledge. We would not let doctors do the same thing. Teaching is just as important.”**

Michele Forman, 2001 Vermont and National Teacher of the Year

---



# Effective Practices for Initiating Change

To establish standards-based graduation by 2005, high schools throughout Vermont are already testing and implementing exciting new approaches to teaching and learning. We have drawn from their experiences and from the body of research reviewed by the Task Force to select the effective practices described in this chapter. These practices, along with other innovative approaches, serve as models for improved student learning.

To ensure continuous evolution toward improved learning, effective practices should be customized to each school. At the same time, the Task Force urges communities to keep in mind these important concepts, supporting the Principles and the Task Force's vision of reform:

**Standards:** The learning of each student should be held to high standards that are established by the local school and district, be consistent with action plans and clearly address Vermont's *Framework*, including Fields of Knowledge and Vital Results standards.

**Multiple pathways to learning:** The means by which students reach these standards can be as diverse as the students are. Helping students determine and pursue personal learning pathways is the shared responsibility of schools, students and families. Offering diverse pathways is consistent with the *Framework*.

**Standards-based assessment:** The assessment of student progress must measure student learning against the common standards found in the *Framework*. Additionally, achievement should be assessed against individual goals and standards developed in conjunction with students' personal learning plans.

We hope that Vermont high schools will produce additional models of effective practices as more communities become engaged in school improvement discussions and action planning with the Twelve Principles.

## Personal Learning Plans

Personal learning plans (PLPs) recognize the individuality of student learning styles, histories, interests and aspirations and allow the student, in concert with school staff and family, to guide the learning experience. Because of the central role each student plays in constructing a PLP, the student's own ambitions, talents and interests become the unifying elements of his or her learning process over four years.



**“High-quality education cannot be sustained without a sound economic base any more than a sound economic base can be sustained without high-quality education. Get it onto your agendas. Work it into your budget planning, and view it as an investment in your own economic future. The education community is ready to embrace you.”**

James R. Bruce, Jr., business partner in the Addison County School-to-Work initiative, in an open letter to the business community, May 1999

Vermont secondary schools have developed several models for PLP programs, which share some common elements:

- Assignment of a teacher advisor to each student for four years
- Student participation in a small, multi-grade or single-grade peer group that works together for one to four years
- The setting and resetting of personal goals and standards for achievement
- Inclusion of learning opportunities in the school and community, such as:
  - ✍ **Self-discovery** – Through exploration activities, students discover what their strengths and interests are and how to express themselves as learners
  - ✍ **Making connections** – Students are exposed to in-school and community educational resources that have the potential to support their PLP goals
  - ✍ **Exploration and application** – Through continuing, active exploration, students work to extend their interests to their post-secondary education plans
  - ✍ **Documentation and demonstration** – Student learning commonly takes the form of projects, portfolios, presentations or public discussions documented in a portfolio

Personal learning plans allow schools to unify many pre-existing programs, such as career exploration and career portfolios, community-based and service learning, field study, internships, applied learning and capstone projects, into an integrated approach to student-centered learning. Further, because a PLP targets individual student goals as well as the common learning goals identified in *Vermont’s Framework of Standards and Learning Opportunities*, the program allows students to follow multiple pathways to learning while demonstrating required individual competencies and achievement of common standards.

Many classroom teachers seek ways to personalize their students’ learning by incorporating students’ strengths, interests and aspirations into the coursework. Students use their PLP strategies as they learn new content in their classes. Self-discovery, making connections, exploration and application, documentation and demonstration are seen as vital stages of students’ classroom learning. The PLP advisory period and conferences, student choice and student empowerment in classroom learning combine to form personalized learning and a socially diverse setting.

### **Personal learning plans further these Principles:**

- |                                 |                                   |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <b>1. Engaged Learners</b>      | <b>6. Real-Life Experiences</b>   |
| <b>2. Challenging Standards</b> | <b>8. Alignment</b>               |
| <b>3. Multiple Pathways</b>     | <b>11. Family Participation</b>   |
| <b>4. Personalized Learning</b> | <b>12. Community Partnerships</b> |

## Capstone, Graduation Challenge and Senior Projects

A capstone, graduation challenge or senior project allows a student to integrate learning from a variety of settings and sources while demonstrating mastery of the Fields of Knowledge and Personal Skills identified in *Vermont's Framework of Standards and Learning Opportunities*. Because of the variety of learning activities involved, these projects also satisfy the *Framework's* requirements for Learning Opportunities. Projects generally include these elements:

### Personal portfolios

This collection of work products, performances and reflections exhibit a student's accomplishments and mastery of the Vital Results over time. The student and his or her family, teachers and peers often review the portfolio jointly.

### Research projects, generally involving community- or work-based learning opportunities

Students identify a topic and work with an advisor (e.g., faculty member or community mentor) to set learning goals for this phase. They may conduct research or demonstrate newly acquired knowledge through an internship or other experience outside of the traditional school setting. Students develop a mentor relationship with an expert in the area of study and also work with a faculty advisor for the project. Documentation of the research may be part of the portfolio, or may be a specific research paper, display, presentation or performance.

### Personal performances or presentations of research

Students share their learning in some original way with a jury of peers, mentors, experts and family members in a public performance or expressive presentation.

High schools throughout Vermont have adopted a variety of models for this practice. In some high schools, students develop skills and knowledge by carrying out a series of smaller projects each year, with the culminating presentation in the senior year. In other schools, the project becomes a focus for the entire senior year. These projects are elective in some high schools, but in at least three high school districts (Cabot, Randolph, and Champlain Valley Union) completion of the project is a requirement for graduation.

These initiatives provide students with the opportunities to establish sound work ethics; develop solid study and research skills; demonstrate high academic achievement; and develop effective social skills, good citizenship practices and a sense of community service. Moreover, these programs allow multiple forms of measurement to assess mastery of *Vermont's Framework of Standards and Learning Opportunities*.

---

**“PLP development is not merely a beefed-up advising program, nor is it a single-event, community-based learning experience. Rather, it represents the beginning of a four-year conversation between a student and her teachers about her hopes and dreams for the future. This conversation will aid in the creation of a personal portfolio in which to keep her reflections about her purpose and her learning. And it will provide her with access to caring adults who will help her to navigate her way.”**

David Gibson and John Clarke,  
*Growing Toward Systemic Change:  
Developing Personal Learning Plans at  
Montpelier High School*

---

**“Putting on a musical for the whole school that I’d composed and orchestrated was a stressful but exciting experience. I can’t say I learned the traditional way, but learned more from personal experience while putting on this concert. It was hard, but it helped me to leave high school feeling prepared for what was to come in college.”**

Vermont high school senior

**Graduation challenge or senior projects further these Principles:**

- |                                 |                                   |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <b>1. Engaged Learners</b>      | <b>5. Flexible Structures</b>     |
| <b>2. Challenging Standards</b> | <b>6. Real-Life Experiences</b>   |
| <b>3. Multiple Pathways</b>     | <b>8. Alignment</b>               |
| <b>4. Personalized Learning</b> | <b>12. Community Partnerships</b> |

## **Multiple Measures to Demonstrate Achievement of Standards**

Because the *School Quality Standards* require high schools to redefine assessment, the Task Force explored the means and methods currently used to measure performance. We found that many widely used practices inhibit or even preclude the opportunity for personalized learning that is central to the vision we are presenting. We believe that each student’s learning must still be held to high, common standards. The pathways toward graduation may vary, but the standards are competencies that each student must achieve. Flexibility lies in how students demonstrate what they have learned and the pathways they follow to reach the commonly held standards for learning.

High schools should explore promoting accountability for performance in many ways. The Task Force identified several already in use in Vermont schools:

- Comprehensive personal learning plans
- Graduation challenge, capstone projects or senior projects
- A combination of standardized assessments, such as the NSRE English/language arts and mathematics exams in grade 10; the Vermont science assessment (PASS) in grades 9 and 11; and the Vermont mathematics portfolio in grade 10
- ACT, PSAT and SAT scores
- Reporting of student achievement in standards-based transcripts that include comparative and personalized measures
- Personal performance, such as reporting the results of a career exploration project or demonstrating competency in a skill such as welding or piano

By gathering and analyzing multiple data points, both for individual students and groups, the school community can evaluate not only student performance but also identify issues that may be inhibiting student achievement schoolwide.

Capstone assessment initiatives allow a well-rounded evaluation of each student’s performance, such as:

- A comprehensive student development collection or portfolio
- Standards-based units of study



- Community service and work-based learning activities
- NSREs in English/language arts and mathematics
- Vermont social studies assessment
- Writing portfolios
- Mathematics portfolios
- Vermont science assessments (PASS)
- Assets surveys

### Multiple measures of performance further these Principles:

- |                          |                          |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Engaged Students      | 5. Flexible Structures   |
| 2. Challenging Standards | 6. Real-Life Experiences |
| 3. Multiple Pathways     | 8. Alignment             |
| 4. Personalized Learning |                          |

## Strong Employer and Education Partnerships

There is ample evidence that many students learn best by doing and that making the connection between the content of education and the world of work motivates and provides added meaning to the high school experience. Partnerships between educators and employers in the community allow for the creation of meaningful career exploration, applied learning and work-based learning opportunities for students. These opportunities are more numerous than schools may realize; while many schools partner with private-sector employers, fruitful partnerships are also available with nonprofit organizations (such as healthcare institutions) and with state and local government, which are often the largest employers in rural areas.

Work-based learning opportunities and partnerships for the development of classroom curricula expand learning for all students. Students, whether college-bound or career-bound, are exposed to a variety of careers and learn to recognize the associated education requirements. Their ability to make decisions about both post-secondary education and employment is enhanced.

Employers can fulfill numerous roles in the high school setting. Opportunities vary with the intensity of the employer's investment in the partnership. In Vermont high schools employers are:

- Participating in the development of applied learning curricula and teaching classes along with educators
- Identifying employability competencies and developing industry-skill standards

**“The local system shall employ a balance and variety of assessment strategies, both classroom-based and school-level assessments, in order to gain useful information on student learning. Students and parents shall be informed on a regular basis regarding progress toward achieving the standards. The school shall provide students the opportunity to evaluate their own work ... These rules are designed to ensure continuous improvement in student performance and the provision of high-quality programs to enable students to attain rigorous standards.”**

*Vermont's School Quality Standards,  
2120.2.2: Development and  
Implementation of Local  
Comprehensive Assessment System*

**“I need to learn more about what’s out there, not just what’s in my own school.”**

Vermont high school student

- Sponsoring teacher internships to facilitate creation of applied curricula
- Sponsoring apprenticeships, internships and other work-based learning opportunities for students
- Assisting as guest speakers on education and careers, sponsoring career fairs and offering job shadowing opportunities
- Acting as mentors

In addition to offering expanded learning opportunities, intensive employer and school partnerships provide benefits to employers:

- Well-educated and highly functioning youth contribute to stability and quality of life in the whole community
- Quality education supports development of a capable workforce
- Quality education systems further community economic development
- Partnerships allow early identification of qualified, experienced, potential employees

### **Strong business and education partnerships further these Principles:**

#### **1. Engaged Learners**

#### **3. Multiple Pathways**

#### **4. Personalized Learning**

#### **6. Real-Life Experiences**

#### **12. Community Partnerships**

## **Flexible Schedules**

One of the most consistent recommendations the Task Force found in major research on high school reform is flexibility in the time and place for learning, including establishment of flexible or block scheduling. As described in *Aiming High: Strategies to Promote High Standards in High Schools*, flexible scheduling is described as a “building block for other aspects of school renewal and offers many benefits:”

- With fewer classes per day, teachers can devote more time to actual classroom instruction and less time to classroom management, such as taking attendance and getting students settled into each new class.
- Students can concentrate on a smaller number of courses at one time, typically four instead of the usual six or seven.
- When teachers are responsible for smaller numbers of classes and students, they are able to establish closer relationships with their students, which has been found to be one of the most important influences on student motivation.

- Longer classes allow teachers to design and implement better project- and work-based learning opportunities. Collaboration among teachers and with business partners is also facilitated by flexible scheduling.

Work-based and community-based learning, community service learning, partnerships with employers in curriculum development and delivery and independent study and capstone projects that take students into the workplace and community all “flex” the walls of the high school and provide multiple opportunities for learning. Providing multiple measures of achievement to match these learning opportunities is key to ensuring that high academic standards are applied to non-classroom experiences.

### **Flexible models for instruction further these Principles:**

- |                                 |                                 |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <b>1. Engaged Learners</b>      | <b>4. Flexible Structures</b>   |
| <b>2. Multiple Pathways</b>     | <b>5. Real-Life Experiences</b> |
| <b>3. Personalized Learning</b> |                                 |

## **Dual Enrollment**

Dual enrollment programs allow high school students to simultaneously earn credit toward high school graduation and a college degree. Guidance is provided to students so that they may align their course selections with their interests and career plans. Effective programs also include an orientation to college studies as well as academic advising and other supports students may need.

The Vermont Public Education Partnership (VPEP), a consortium of college educators, identifies several benefits of dual enrollment:

- Providing challenging curricular options
- Providing accelerated opportunities to earn college credit, saving students time and money
- Presenting educational opportunities not available at the local high school
- Smoothing the transition between secondary and post-secondary education
- Offering students alternative learning opportunities that appeal to different learning styles and diverse levels of motivation

While dual enrollment options are available in many parts of the State, the Task Force believes this option should be available throughout Vermont to provide challenging learning opportunities, multiple pathways of learning and better continuity for all students. As noted by the Vermont Public Education Partnership (VPEP), “high school access to appropriate post-secondary learning becomes an important component of the ‘menu’ of programs and services from which students can design their individualized learning experiences.”

---

**“Some of the most rewarding educational experiences I have had come from work with students in individualized studies.”**

Teacher, Peoples Academy

---

**“The best preparation  
for college is taking a  
college course.”**

Dennis Littky, The Met High School,  
Providence, Rhode Island

## **Dual enrollment furthers these Principles:**

- |                                 |                                 |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <b>1. Engaged Learners</b>      | <b>4. Personalized Learning</b> |
| <b>2. Challenging Standards</b> | <b>5. Flexible Structures</b>   |
| <b>3. Multiple Pathways</b>     | <b>10. Pre-K-16 Continuity</b>  |

## **Using Post-Secondary Data for Systems Improvement**

Our renewed vision is that Vermont high schools will prepare each student for a successful adult life. Therefore, we must not only evaluate student performance while students are in school, but also after they graduate. Surveying students after graduation adds yet another important element for assessing the effectiveness of our secondary schools and the relevance of the learning opportunities provided. As post-secondary evaluations evolve, our high schools, communities, families and students should be able to make better choices and decisions about:

- Adequacy of student preparation for post-secondary education
- Adequacy of student preparation for career choice and career success
- Relevance and effectiveness of curricula and learning opportunities
- The relationship between particular pathways to learning and post-secondary success, whether in career or higher education settings

Standardized testing, portfolios, graduation rates and other in-school measures of achievement provide an important snapshot of progress toward the Twelve Principles. Vermont’s high school graduates are an untapped reservoir of information for evaluating and then improving the elementary through secondary school experience for future students.

## **Incorporation of post-secondary data into the pre-K-12 assessment framework furthers these Principles:**

- 2. Challenging Standards**
- 7. Instructional leadership**
- 10. Pre-K-16 Continuity**

## Mentoring

Studies consistently show that a supportive one-to-one mentoring relationship between a youth and an older person reduces absenteeism, inspires students to achieve and set high goals, builds confidence and self-esteem and leads to better social and academic performance. Being exposed to real-life work experiences with a mentor allows students to see the direct relationship between academic performance and life achievement. The combined impact gives adolescents crucial support while demonstrating the need to stay in school. An additional benefit is exposure of adults to the high school atmosphere, which leads both parties to a better understanding of the community and the challenges it faces. Effective mentoring programs involve more than recruiting and matching. Successful long-term programs have found that key elements are orientation for mentors and mentees and ongoing support for the mentoring relationship.

### Mentoring furthers these Principles:

- |                          |                             |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Engaged Learners      | 6. Real-Life Experiences    |
| 3. Multiple Pathways     | 7. Instructional Leadership |
| 4. Personalized Learning | 12. Community Partnerships  |

## Close Relationships Between High Schools and Technical Education Centers

Technical education centers around the country that have succeeded in improving student performance have made high academic performance the foundation of their reforms. Historically in our education system, students choosing technical education centers were those who had been tracked into low-level academic courses at their home schools, and tech school courses failed to incorporate high academic standards that either prepared students for success in the workplace or allowed them to pursue further education. In a turnabout of their missions, successful technical education schools have shifted from providing shared-time vocational programs to offering a comprehensive high school education.

At the same time, the academic high schools that have succeeded in improving student performance have done so by introducing real-life experiences and practical applications into their education programs. Fortunately for students in Vermont, work-based and community-based learning opportunities have expanded greatly in high schools, principally through the five-year School-to-Work initiative that concluded in March 2001. Sustaining career opportunities will require maintenance and further development of the relationships among all educational resources in communities, including technical education centers and sending high schools.

---

**“Rate your success not on the minimum requirements for a high school education, but on how high your students have achieved. Push to raise expectations.”**

1994 Essex High School graduate's  
marginal notes on returned 2000  
Alumni Survey

---

**“While families bear the primary obligation to care for their children and to help them become healthy, contributing citizens, other institutions can help families accommodate to a rapidly changing world. A mentor can provide the nurturing, supportive adult relationship absent in the lives of many of our young people.”**

Vermont Student Assistance  
Corporation, *Mentoring Guide*

Research shows that student performance is enhanced when students are provided a mix of academic, technical and real-world experience. A traditional comprehensive high school does not have the resources to do this, nor do technical and career centers that serve multiple sending high schools have the capacity to provide a range of opportunities to each and every student. Better communication and partnerships between high schools and technical and career centers can create systems in which high schools provide a broader range of technical skills and experiences in collaboration with technical education centers where students can access strong academic programs leading toward specific careers.

The Task Force urges communities to foster closer alignment between high schools and technical education centers. Communities can accomplish this by:

- More closely aligning grades 9 to 12 curricula
- Offering encouragement and technical assistance that allow schools to share funding so that technical education centers, communities and high schools have a common financial base
- Ensuring that high schools, communities and technical education centers share a common mission; developing school and community task forces to bring together community members, technical education centers and schools on a regular basis
- Encouraging joint action planning between sending high schools and technical education centers
- Increasing the availability of internship and apprenticeship opportunities that feature a high school and post-secondary connection
- Collaborating on the development of a comprehensive career system and the implementation of career pathways

**Strong relationships between sending high schools and technical education centers further these Principles:**

- |                                 |                                   |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <b>1. Engaged Learners</b>      | <b>5. Flexible Structures</b>     |
| <b>2. Challenging Standards</b> | <b>6. Real-Life Experiences</b>   |
| <b>3. Multiple Pathways</b>     | <b>9. Shared Purpose</b>          |
| <b>4. Personalized Learning</b> | <b>12. Community Partnerships</b> |

# Small Learning Communities

Small learning communities is the name given to a variety of organizational strategies for creating smaller learning groups within a whole school environment. Such strategies include:

- Establishing small learning clusters, “houses,” career academies, magnet schools or other approaches to creating schools within schools
- Block scheduling
- Personal adult advocates, teacher advisory systems and other mentoring strategies
- Reduced teaching loads
- Other innovations designed to create more personalized high school experiences for students and to improve student achievement

The benefits to students are: learning within a smaller, supportive community of peers; developing personal relationships with peers and learning important social interaction skills; developing more personal relationships with teachers and other adults; and feeling safer in a large high school. For teachers, this organizational model provides opportunities for teaming with colleagues for integrated curricula, taking more responsibility for fewer students and developing closer relationships with students.

Citing numerous studies, the U.S. Department of Education Office of Elementary and Secondary Education states that “the size of the learning environment has an indirect effect on student learning ... Essentially, size creates conditions for success, especially when high expectations and standards exist.”

The Task Force recommends that districts with large high schools, especially areas with supervisory union high schools, consider developing small learning communities. By implementing a house system, career academy, faculty advisory or other small learning cluster, schools will be providing safer, more personalized and satisfying learning environments for students and teachers. This is particularly important for students arriving in a large union high school from small, sending elementary and middle schools.

## Smaller learning communities further these Principles:

- |                          |                          |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Engaged Learners      | 4. Personalized Learning |
| 2. Challenging Standards | 5. Flexible Structures   |
| 3. Multiple Pathways     | 10. Pre-K-16 Continuity  |

For more examples of effective practices and contact information for the examples described above, please see Appendix A.

**“Large schools can have an even more deleterious effect in a predominantly rural community than in areas where people might already be accustomed to malls, large housing developments and the urban-suburban highway system. For these small communities, where most elementary schools do not have more than 200 students, a high school with more than 1,000 students is monstrous.”**

Orleans-Essex North Supervisory Union, Smaller Learning Communities Program grant application





## Chapter 5

# Practices to Consider Phasing Out

At the Kidsfirst Conference in May 2000, Task Force members facilitated the first “Fishbowl” session in which 20 students from several Vermont high schools responded to the question: “If you could create your version of the idea high school, what would it look like?” In a frank discussion of their own high school experiences, students made clear the many challenges we confront as we work on a fresh vision of how our high schools can improve learning for all students.

In considering the structure of the system that we need to change, the Task Force consulted *Promising Futures*, a document developed by the Maine Commission on Secondary Education, which looked at the same conditions described by our students and courageously presented a list of practices that have since outlived their usefulness.

The Task Force believes that substantive improvement in high school learning cannot occur if we hold sacrosanct any of the structures and practices that currently define the high school experience. We recommend that schools, districts and communities carefully evaluate whether the practices outlined in this chapter continue to serve the best interests of all their students. If they do not, they should be phased out and replaced with practices aligned with relevant aspects of the Twelve Principles reported here.



**“The manner in which a high school organizes itself and the ways in which it uses time to create a framework affects almost everything about teaching and learning in the school.”**

National Association of Secondary School Principals, *Breaking Ranks: Changing an American Institution*

## Phase Outs Pertaining to Learning and Teaching

# 1

**PHASE OUT: Master schedules that lockstep students' learning opportunities.**

**Why?** Effective learning activities respond to learners' and teachers' needs. Master schedules often confine activities to short, uniform periods, single-discipline curricula and few hands-on or experiential learning opportunities that address diverse styles and paces of learning.

**Consider instead . . .**

### **These Principles:**

4. Personalized Learning
5. Flexible Structures
6. Real-Life Experiences

### **These Effective Practices:**

- Allocation of flexible blocks of time
- A.M./P.M. Structure: A.M. for class instruction; P.M. for co-curricular, professional development, integrated teams
- Capstone programs and individual studies
- Work-based, community and service learning

# 2

**PHASE OUT: Student loads that preclude effective teaching.**

**Why?** Teachers cannot effectively assign learning tasks and give regular, individualized feedback to students if they are responsible for too many students at one time.

**Consider instead . . .**

### **These Principles:**

1. Engaged Learners
4. Personalized Learning
7. Instructional Leadership

### **These Effective Practices:**

- “House” concept: smaller student groups, core teacher teams from multiple disciplines, greater personalization
- Advisories
- Cross-high school networking (e.g., foreign language programs via Vermont Interactive Learning Network)
- Arranging mentors for all students and teachers

# 3

## PHASE OUT: Classifying and teaching students by ability or interest (tracking).

**Why?** Students who spend their entire secondary years in lower track, homogeneous groups experience depressed aspirations, lower academic self-confidence and limited achievement.

**Consider instead ...**

### These Principles:

2. Challenging Standards
3. Multiple Pathways
4. Personalized Learning

### These Effective Practices:

- Career pathways
- “Houses” that group students by interest or grade
- Personalized learning plans

# 4

## PHASE OUT: Student assessments based only on grades or on forms of learning that require memorization and little application.

**Why?** Grade point averages (GPA), graduation based solely on grades as the measure of learning and growth and transcripts that report only grades serve few educational purposes and limit everyone’s understanding of achievement and success.

**Consider instead ...**

### These Principles:

2. Challenging Standards
3. Multiple Pathways
4. Personalized Learning
6. Real-Life Experiences
8. Alignment

### These Effective Practices:

- Multiple measures to demonstrate achievement of standards, including personal portfolios, state and local measures
- Standards-based graduation and transcripts
- Learning goals, aligned with *Vermont’s Framework of Standards and Learning Opportunities*, set by student, family and faculty advisor
- Capstone projects or graduation challenge experiences

**“We are trying to create some level of dissonance. As you embrace the Principles, you will come to understand that many current practices interfere with the journey to high school renewal.”**

Vermont High School Task Force

**“A 1999 survey of teachers in Vermont found that ... 89.3 percent of high school teachers did not use a curriculum based on the Vermont standards. Further, in the same survey ... 63 percent of high school teachers responded ‘no’ when asked if they used a curriculum that was reviewed for alignment with the state standards ... These figures indicate that continued evaluation of implementation and the role of standards is necessary.”**

National Conference of State Legislatures, *Teaching in Vermont: An Inventory of Policies and Practices*

## 5 PHASE OUT: Curricula and learning based solely on texts and teacher-determined goals, topics and activities.

**Why?** Curriculum will engage students in meaningful learning when student needs and interests and *Vermont’s Framework of Standards and Learning Opportunities* are the basis for that curriculum.

**Consider instead ...**

### **These Principles:**

1. Engaged Learners
2. Challenging Standards
3. Multiple Pathways
8. Alignment

### **This Effective Practice:**

- School as the hub of a comprehensive, community learning network that includes personalized learning plans, capstone projects, year-end learning periods, internships, work-based learning and dual enrollment options

## 6 PHASE OUT: A co-curriculum that is seen as “extra” curriculum.

**Why?** All student activities can be re-cast as learning opportunities when they are defined as an essential part of students’ learning experience. Student learning goals, in alignment with Vermont’s *Framework*, can provide a framework for the structure and evaluation of student activities.

**Consider instead ...**

### **These Principles:**

3. Multiple Pathways
4. Personalized Learning
6. Real-Life Experiences
8. Alignment
12. Community Partnerships

### **These Effective Practices:**

- Linking goals of student organizations and activities to student progress and action plan
- Establishing goal-based evaluation systems for student activities with shared responsibility for assessment
- Linking individual co-curricular activities to individual learning plans
- Using co-curriculum to provide a full range of learning opportunities and experiences in alignment with Vermont’s *Framework*.

# 7

## **PHASE OUT: Diploma requirements that use only Carnegie units based on traditional grading systems.**

**Why?** The diversity of knowledge, skills and personal attributes that must be mastered to succeed in the world today, and the ability to integrate and apply this learning, cannot be categorized or measured by systems developed more than a half-century ago.

### **Consider instead ...**

#### **These Principles:**

1. Engaged Learners
3. Multiple Pathways
5. Flexible Structures
6. Real-Life Experiences

#### **These Effective Practices:**

- Using multiple measures to demonstrate achievement of standards
- Establishing standards-based promotion and graduation
- Requiring personal learning plans, personal portfolios and capstone projects
- Requiring work-based and community-based learning opportunities

# 8

## **PHASE OUT: Study halls that offer neither student and teacher educational interaction nor true opportunities for learning.**

**Why?** Students should have opportunities for meaningful learning experiences throughout the school day. A study hall that is little more than leisure time is not education time well spent, nor does it optimize the investment we make in a professional faculty, technology and other resources.

### **Consider instead ...**

#### **These Principles:**

1. Engaged Learners
2. Challenging Standards
3. Multiple Pathways
5. Flexible Structures

#### **These Effective Practices:**

- Community-based learning, service learning internships and other off-campus learning experiences
- Advisories
- Expanding student awareness of available supports
- Study groups that focus on student-initiated topics
- Regularly scheduled student “fishbowls” with teachers, administrators and the community
- Dual enrollment options

**“High schools must abandon or revise the Carnegie unit so that they no longer equate seat time with learning.”**

National Association of Secondary School Principals, *Breaking Ranks: Changing an American Institution*

**“Central to the public’s belief in higher (educational) standards is what amounts to a philosophical rule of thumb for dealing with children. Ask more from them, and they will do more. Ask less, and they will do just enough to get by.”**

*Standards and Accountability: A Report from the Public Agenda for the 1999 National Education Summit*



## Phase Outs Pertaining to School Organization

### 9 PHASE OUT: The six-hour, five-day school week, September to June school year.

**Why?** Learning, especially learning that incorporates workplace and community-based projects, should occur when the best opportunities arise.

#### Consider instead ...

##### These Principles:

- 3. Multiple Pathways
- 5. Flexible Structures
- 6. Real-Life Experiences

##### These Effective Practices:

- Allocation of flexible blocks of time for instruction
- Extended or restructured school year
- Distance learning
- Split sessions
- Dual enrollment options

### 10 PHASE OUT: Limiting faculty organization to discipline-specific groupings.

**Why?** Teachers need to be part of instructional teams that focus on a core group of students as well as discipline-specific teams. Development of closer teacher and student relationships improves student learning and teacher satisfaction. Cross-disciplinary faculty teams provide additional professional support for teachers.

#### Consider instead ...

##### These Principles:

- 4. Personalized Learning
- 5. Flexible Structures
- 7. Instructional Leadership

##### These Effective Practices:

- Faculty teams that cross department lines
- Study groups for teachers
- Teacher-leaders in each school
- Cross-disciplinary teams of teachers assigned to a house (see small Learning Communities, chapter 4)
- Community-based teaching teams (e.g., art faculty plus local artists)

# 11

## **PHASE OUT: Supervision and evaluation that ignore student outcomes.**

**Why?** Meaningful evaluations will address performance criteria related to student learning and growth and be aligned with Vermont's *Framework of Standards and Learning Opportunities*.

### **Consider instead ...**

#### **These Principles:**

- 2. Challenging Standards
- 4. Personalized Learning
- 7. Instructional Leadership
- 10. Pre-K-16 Continuity

#### **These Effective Practices:**

- Use of longitudinal outcomes data (e.g., post-secondary enrollment and retention, student surveys)
- Peer evaluation and conferencing to evaluate student work
- Use data from educational support teams and action planning to develop teacher and administrator roles, responsibilities and subsequent evaluations

**“One of the most critical barriers to providing professional development activities is not resources, but time. Without adequate non-instructional time during the school day, it is difficult to provide the sustained, curriculum-oriented opportunities encouraged by the Vermont Standards Board for Professional Educators (VSBPE), that have been proven by research to be more effective in raising student achievement.”**

National Conference of State Legislatures, *Teaching in Vermont: An Inventory of Policies and Practices*

# 12

## **PHASE OUT: Job descriptions or work assignments that are predicated on the assumption that teachers are working only when instructing groups.**

**Why?** Time for planning, authentic assessment, individual student advisories, professional development and student and parent conferences need to be recognized as part of a teacher's work week.

### **Consider instead ...**

#### **These Principles:**

- 5. Flexible Structures
- 7. Instructional Leadership
- 12. Community Partnerships

#### **These Effective Practices:**

- Flexible use of time, including adjustment to teaching load, recognition of non-classroom time that includes professional development and individual student advisories
- Redefining educators' roles to include other professional responsibilities such as developing teacher mentoring programs for all new teachers, educational support team activities, work- and community-based learning coordination, teacher-leader roles, advisories, business-sponsored internships, etc. (see glossary)

**“When you hear faculty referring to in-service day as ‘donut day,’ you know they aren’t finding it meaningful. Filling, maybe, but not fulfilling.”**

Bob Stanton, Assistant Superintendent, Lamoille South Supervisory Union

## 13 **PHASE OUT: Faculty meetings and structures that limit time for sharing professional information and perspectives.**

**Why?** Faculty involvement in decisions about students, instructional matters, curriculum and educational policy will enhance a school’s effectiveness.

**Consider instead . . .**

### **These Principles:**

- 8. Alignment
- 7. Instructional Leadership
- 9. Shared Purpose

### **These Effective Practices:**

- Faculty meetings jointly planned and delivered by faculty
- Meetings that group faculty in a variety of configurations and interdisciplinary teams
- Opportunities for faculty members to present student work that will serve as the focus for specific discussion
- Using faculty meeting time to align instructional programs with Vermont’s *Framework*.

## 14 **PHASE OUT: Decision-making processes limiting the role of students and families in key decisions regarding present and future learning opportunities.**

**Why?** Involvement in decision-making increases student and family engagement in the learning process and improves school accountability to the community.

**Consider instead . . .**

### **These Principles:**

- 1. Engaged Learners
- 4. Personalized Learning
- 9. Shared Purpose
- 11. Family Participation

### **These Effective Practices:**

- Flexibility in scheduling and resources to give parents access to educators through office hours, voice mail, Internet bulletin boards, student-led conferences, etc.
- Personal learning plans
- Community dialogue nights
- Inclusion of students on school improvement teams and other leadership groups



# 15

## **PHASE OUT: Professional development that is not integrated with daily professional practice.**

**Why?** The most effective professional development is continuous and focuses on educators' learning needs—needs that, if answered, will improve an educator's ability to meet student learning needs. Educators themselves are best able to identify these needs and to plan professional development activities to meet them.

### **Consider instead . . .**

#### **These Principles:**

- 7. Instructional Leadership
- 9. Shared Purpose

#### **These Effective Practices:**

- Linking the school's professional development plan to the district plan and the Five Standards for Vermont Educators developed by the Vermont Standards Board for Professional Educators
- Emphasizing professional development models that are embedded in the work of teaching, such as teacher-leaders and peer coaches
- Alignment of professional development plans with national staff development council standards

---

**“The fullest development of the intellect today makes it possible for them to continue developing visions of ever more remarkable human beings. The best way to predict the future, however, is to invent it now.”**

Arthur Costa, Ed.D

---



## Phase Outs Pertaining to District, Community and State Support

### 16 **PHASE OUT: Policies and procedures of the school, district and state that inhibit creativity and collaboration among faculty, between high schools and technical education centers and between secondary schools and their communities.**

**Why?** Policies and procedures, including contractually directed requirements, should function principally to serve student learning and to foster the attainment of *Vermont's Framework of Standards and Learning Opportunities*. Stakeholders have often worked in isolation, developing significant plans that have resulted in competition instead of collaboration to benefit student learning.

#### Consider instead ...

##### **These Principles:**

- 7. Instructional Leadership
- 9. Shared Purpose

##### **These Effective Practices:**

- Evaluating school policies for harmony with learning goals
- Aligning district schedules to enable collaboration in curriculum and professional development
- Seeking waivers and removing barriers to innovation
- Building community partnerships resulting in collaborations on curricula and fostering enhanced learning opportunities for students and professional development for educators.
- Creating mentoring relationships that cross building and delivery system boundaries
- Providing opportunities for teachers to create integrated units of study and complete internships with businesses
- Organizing “fishbowl” sessions to let students, families and the community understand each others’ concerns and needs (see Appendix F)

# 17

**PHASE OUT:** Parent and school organizations that focus on special interests and/or on fundraising for activities that have no clear educational mission or accountability framework.

**Why?** Activities sponsored by the school should be examined in light of the school's mission and goals and the contributions made to student learning and development. If activities are not aligned with the core mission, they should be recast to provide authentic learning opportunities or considered for discontinuation.

**Consider instead . . .**

## **These Principles:**

- 8. Alignment
- 9. Shared Purpose
- 11. Family Participation

## **These Effective Practices:**

- Educating parent and school support organizations about the school's vision and mission
- Linking all student-parent groups to action planning and using the planning process to focus community groups
- Linking goals of parent organizations to student progress and establishing a goals-based evaluation system with shared ownership
- If an organization cannot implement needed changes, consider whether it is worth retaining





# Conclusion

*High Schools on the Move (HSOM)* celebrates those who are already on the journey to high school renewal and innovation and offers those who are not the encouragement to take the first steps. In this final chapter, we reflect on Vermont's readiness to embrace a long-term, systemic, secondary school change effort and on the voice of Vermont's secondary students and youth.

Despite a decade long standards-based K-12 reform movement, Vermont's secondary schools have not engaged as easily as its elementary schools. Secondary school change contains its own issues and challenges. The Task Force believes that *HSOM* adds a fresh perspective to secondary school change and offers a framework through which to engage in this worthy effort. The report lends support to *Vermont's Framework of Standards and Learning Opportunities*. Vermont's current school improvement strategy is centered upon the *Framework* and can be greatly enhanced by *High Schools on the Move*.

Vermont has developed most of the capacity needed to implement and refine a statewide process to guide high school renewal by personalizing the experience for each student. The Vermont Department of Education looks forward to collaborating with its partners to build capacity for this journey.

## Recommendations for Long Term, Systemic Change

Based on the Task Force's work, the Department of Education is working to establish a Center for High School Renewal and Innovation and a network of schools moving toward systemic secondary school change. This center and network will have three purposes:

- To recognize, support and reward high schools that implement any of the Twelve Principles or that adapt existing systems to increase student engagement in learning
- To form a network of schools learning from each other and serving as demonstration sites and models for systemic change
- To organize a statewide movement that continuously renews Vermont's commitment to quality secondary education by connecting related initiatives at different schools, providing technical support for local adaptation and publishing the results of promising strategies

Appendix B, Assessment Rubric for the Twelve Principles, includes a set of indicators for assessing school functioning in relation to the Principles.



## Vermont's Change Strategy

The High School Task Force asserts that the high school experience cannot be personalized through a series of minor adjustments. Changing any component of the high school experience requires changing the whole structure. Consequently, Vermont's challenge is to work with every community to change the structure of every high school. The Task Force has identified four strategies to initiate this statewide change:



- **Publication and distribution of *High Schools on the Move: Renewing Vermont's Commitment to Quality Secondary Education*, which informs schools and communities about the need for change and provides the Twelve Principles as a framework for that change**
- **Creation of and support for a network of schools engaged in change as well as administration of grants that support comprehensive change efforts**
- **Establishment of a High Schools on the Move network to foster experimentation and cross-school interaction among participating schools**
- **Formation of a Center for High School Renewal and Innovation to support statewide change, coordinate education policy and facilitate long-term adaptation and growth**

These strategies for change are already in motion. Publishing this document is the first step toward implementing the Task Force's vision, and the Department of Education recently issued a first solicitation for career academy grants, funded through the Federal High School Reform State Grant program. The River Valley Consortium (which includes Bellows Falls Union High School, Green Mountain Union High School, Black River High School, River Valley Technical Center), Peoples Academy, South Burlington High School and Mount Abraham Union High School each received a grant.

As schools try to incorporate the Twelve Principles, they will need places to visit where they can see change happening. This fall, Peoples Academy in Morrisville, Vermont will host design studios highlighting effective practices in place at their school that support the principles.

A design studio is a carefully planned visit during which the visiting team engages in strategic planning. Instead of simply sending a team to visit, a high school going to a design studio identifies a focus for their visit, based on materials sent by the host school. The visiting team analyzes the gap between current practices in their school and the vision for the practices that they would like to implement before attending. During the design studio, visiting teams reflect on what they are learning. The host school shares "lessons learned" from its reform journey as well as some of the history of its reform effort. This sharing helps the visiting school prepare for change. We hope that in the future more schools will host design studios to share their promising practices, facilitate learning and encourage change.

Additionally, the Department of Education is developing a secondary school focus team, which will promote the recommendations in *HSOM* and coordinate and support secondary change efforts at the department. Work is also beginning to create the Center for High School Renewal and Innovation.

These first steps are encouraging and offer great hope for the future. More than one-third of Vermont's high schools worked with department staff members to develop proposals for career academy grants. Many high schools that applied for a career academy grant reported that the process of examining the Twelve Principles in relation to current practices at their schools was extremely useful; most said they look forward to reading this report and continuing their exploration into high school renewal. This provides compelling evidence that Vermont's high schools, and their leaders, are ready for change. The Vermont Department of Education will work diligently to pursue future funding for its high school renewal and innovation vision.

As the Task Force worked, its members tried to keep in mind students' voices in answering so many fundamental questions about the high school experience: What do secondary students want? What do they fear? What are their hopes, dreams and aspirations? In the Task Force's work with Vermont students and youth, seven themes emerged:

**Relevancy and application:** High school students want to be able to connect the knowledge they gain in school to the challenges they will face as adults. In short, they want to be engaged learners.

**Caring adults:** High school students want daily contact in small classes with adults who understand their interests, respect their talents and care as much about students' personal experiences as their academic achievements.

**Safety:** Students want to pursue their aspirations free from fear of oppression and/or persecution because their values make them different from others.

**Being known and valued:** Students want to be recognized by adults and other students for their unique contributions to the school and community.

**Respect:** Students want to be granted respect for their individuality, not just their membership in a group, class or achievement level. They want to return respect to those who treat them with respect.

**Personal Interests and Aspirations:** High school students want to pursue their own investigation of learning, not a prescribed regimen of unrelated classes determined by rules, requirements and obscure traditions. They want to experience personalized learning and instruction, and they want opportunities to develop leadership skills.

**Multiple pathways:** Students want multiple avenues to achieve graduation. They do not want a one-size-fits-all experience.





## Some Final Thoughts

For final emphasis, this report closes with statistics that illustrate the potential costs if leadership is not provided for high school reform. More than 50 percent of the schools identified for technical assistance in 2001 were secondary schools; there is no indication this figure will decrease. The dropout rate in Vermont, although lower than the national average of 26 percent, hovers at 20 percent. This means that one out of every five Vermont students who starts high school does not finish with his or her class. Ninety-five percent of youth incarcerated in Vermont dropped out of high school. It is abundantly clear that without a high school credential, young people face diminished futures.

This report outlines the pragmatic wisdom and inspiration needed to help renew secondary education in Vermont. It contains tools and strategies to assist communities and schools to meet the needs of their diverse learners. We know that, developmentally, the secondary years are a time of great transition for youth. In Vermont, we want each one of our young people to transition to adulthood successfully. The Task Force urges you to use this report in the hopes of achieving that goal.



## Appendix A

# Examples of Effective Practices

### School and Employer Partnerships

Mt. Abraham High School and Geiger of Austria  
Ed McGuire  
Mt. Abraham Union High School  
7 Airport Drive, Bristol, VT 05443  
(802) 453-2333  
emcguire@mtabe.k12.vt.us

Arlington High School and Mack Molding  
Laurie Hoyt  
Arlington Memorial High School  
529 East Arlington Road, Arlington, VT 05250  
(802) 375-2589  
www.amhseagles.com

Lamoille Business Education Trade Alliance (LBETA)  
Service Excellence  
Laurie Burnham  
Green Mountain Technology Center  
P.O. Box 600  
Route 15 West  
Hyde Park, VT 05655  
(802) 888-4447, ext. 215  
lburnham@cmtcc.k12.vt.us

CISCO Academy  
Steve Barner  
South Burlington High School  
550 Dorset Street, South Burlington, VT 05403-6296  
(802) 652-7015  
steve@sbschools.net  
www.vtacad.net

### Dual Enrollment

Linking Learning to Life and College Connections  
Dhyana Bradley, Career Direction Center Specialist  
Burlington High School  
52 Institute Road, Burlington, VT 05401  
(802) 951-8850  
d.bradley@bsdvt.org  
www.uvm.edu/~linking

Mt. Abraham High School and Community College of Vermont  
Ed McGuire  
Mt. Abraham Union High School  
7 Airport Drive, Bristol, VT 05443  
(802) 453-2333  
emcguire@mtabe.k12.vt.us





Champlain Valley Union High School SummerLink  
Eddie Krasnow  
Champlain Valley Union High School  
369 Champlain Valley Union Road, Hinesburg, VT 05461  
(802) 482-7100  
eddie@cvu.cssd.k12.vt.us

Vermont Academy of Science and Technology (VAST)  
Vermont Technical College Program  
Dwight Cross  
Vermont Technical College  
P.O. Box 500, Randolph Center, VT 05061  
(802) 728-1244  
vast@vtc.edu

Rutland/Stafford Center-Vermont Technical College Partnership  
Steve Ingram  
Vermont Technical College  
P.O. Box 500, Randolph Center, VT 05061  
(802) 728-1310  
singram@vtc.vsc.edu

Arlington High School, Burr & Burton Academy  
and Mt. Anthony High School with Community College of Vermont (College Start)  
Jeannie Jenkins  
Community College of Vermont  
324 Main Street, Bennington, VT 05201-2244  
(802) 447-2361  
jenkinsj@mail.ccv.vsc.edu

Walden Project at Vergennes High School and Community College of Vermont  
Matt Schlein  
Vergennes Union High School  
50 Monkton Road, Vergennes, VT 05491  
(802) 877-2938  
mchlein@anwsu.k12.vt.us

## **Dropout Prevention and Recovery**

Vermont Consortium on Successful High School Completion  
Fran Weinbaum, Coordinator  
128 Bliss Road, Montpelier, VT 05602  
(802) 229-0940

Prime Family Services  
Deb Marro  
P.O. Box 6015, Rutland, VT 05702  
(802) 786-2165  
dzm@sover.net

Linking Learning to Life  
Rich Tulikangas  
52 Institute Road, Burlington, VT 05401  
(802) 951-8850  
rtulikan@bsdvt.org

## Professional Development

U-32 Junior-Senior High School and Washington Central Supervisory Union  
Writing Across the Curriculum: Professional Development for grades 9-12

Nancy Disenhaus

U-32 Junior-Senior High School

930 Gallison Hill Road, Montpelier, VT 50602

(802) 229-0321

catehaus@together.net

Lamoille Area Professional Development Academy

Robert Stanton, Ed.D.

P.O. Box 545, Morrisville, VT 05661

(802) 888-1105

lbeta@pshift.com

## Multiple Measures

Rutland Capstone Assessment

Mary Moran, Superintendent

Rutland City Schools

6 Church Street, Rutland, VT 05701

(802) 773-1903

mmoran@rutlandhs.k12.vt.us

North Country Union High School Electronic Portfolio

Bill Rivard

North Country Union High School

209 Veterans Avenue, Newport, VT 05855

(802) 334-7921

brivard@northcountryhs.k12.vt.us

Essex High School

Armando Vilaseca, Principal

Essex Community Education Center

2 Educational Drive, Essex Junction, VT 05452

(802) 879-7121

avilaseca@ejhs.k12.vt.us

## Small Learning Communities

Champlain Valley Union High School Houses

Connie Metz

Champlain Valley Union High School

369 CVU Road, Hinesburg, VT 05461

(802) 482-7100

connie@cvuhs.org

North Country Union High School

Rod Weston, Superintendent

Orleans-Essex Supervisory Union

338 Highland Avenue, Suite 4, Newport, VT 05830

(802) 334-5847

drwest@pobox.com





## Personal Learning Plans

### Montpelier High School

Peter Evans  
5 High School Drive, Montpelier, VT 05602  
(802) 225-8000  
peter@mpsvt.org

### Peoples Academy Individualized Studies

Dorinne Dorfman  
202 Copley Avenue, Morrisville, VT 05661  
(802) 888-4600  
dorinne.dorfman@morrisville.org

### Mt. Abraham Union High School

Personal Learning Plans and Community-Based Learning  
Ed McGuire  
7 Airport Drive, Bristol, VT 05443  
(802) 453-2333  
emcguire@mtabe.k12.vt.us

### Twinfield Union High School (Renaissance Program)

Debra Stoleroff  
106 Nasmith Brook Road, Plainfield, VT 05667  
(802) 426-3213  
debra@vtlink.net

## Flexible Models

### Peoples Academy Individualized Studies

Dorinne Dorfman  
202 Copley Avenue, Morrisville, VT 05661  
(802) 888-4600  
dorinne.dorfman@morrisville.org

### Rutland High School Year End Studies (YES!) Program

Larry Lattanzi  
Rutland High School  
22 Stratton Road, Rutland, VT 05701  
(802) 770-1070  
llattanzi@rutlandhs.k12.vt.us

### Career Pathways

Anthony Napolitano  
Burr & Burton Academy  
P.O. Box 498, Seminary Avenue, Manchester, VT 05254  
(802) 362-1775  
tnapolitano@burrburton.org

## Career and Technical Education Centers and High Schools

### The Essex Center For Technology and Essex High School

Armando Vilaseca, Principal  
Essex Community Education Center  
2 Educational Drive, Essex Junction, VT 05452  
(802) 879-7121  
avilaseca@ejhs.k12.vt.us

## Post-Secondary Data

### Essex High School

Armando Vilaseca, Principal  
Essex Community Education Center  
2 Educational Drive, Essex Junction, VT 05452  
(802) 879-7121  
avilaseca@ejhs.k12.vt.us

### Mt. Abraham Union High School

Ed McGuire  
7 Airport Drive, Bristol, VT 05443  
(802) 453-2333  
emcguire@mtabe.k21.vt.us

### Vermont State Colleges (VSC), Vermont Department of Education and University of Vermont (UVM) longitudinal study on performance of Vermont high school graduates at VSC and UVM

Bud Meyers, deputy commissioner for standards and assessment  
Vermont Department of Education  
120 State Street, Montpelier, VT 05602  
(802) 828-2756  
bmeyers@doe.state.vt.us

## Mentoring

### Vermont Chamber Business Education Partnership

Robin Morton  
P.O. Box 649, Montpelier, VT 05601  
(802) 223-0603  
mortons7@aol.com

### Essex High School

Armando Vilaseca, Principal  
Essex Community Education Center  
2 Educational Drive, Essex Junction, VT 05452  
(802) 879-7121  
avilaseca@ejhs.k12.vt.us





## Graduation Challenge and Capstone Projects

### Randolph Union High School (Senior Project)

John Holmes  
15 Forest Street, Randolph, VT 05060  
(802) 728-3397  
jholmes@mail.ruhs.k12.vt.us

### Champlain Valley Union High School (Graduation Challenge)

Andrea VanHoven  
Directions Office, Champlain Valley Union  
369 Champlain Valley Union Road, Hinesburg, VT 05461  
(802) 482-7100  
andrea@cvu.cssd.k12.vt.us

### Rutland High School (Capstone)

Carolyn Ravenna  
22 Stratton Road, Rutland, VT 05701  
(802) 770-1070  
cravenna@rutlandhs.k12.vt.us

### Cabot High School Individual Opportunities to Achieve (IOTA)

David Book  
25 Common Road, Cabot, VT 05647  
(802) 563-2289  
dbcabot@aol.com

### Mt. Abraham Union High School

Ed McGuire  
7 Airport Drive, Bristol, VT 05443  
(802) 453-2333  
emcguire@mtabe.k12.vt.us

### Winooski High School (Senior Project)

Brian Hoover  
80 Normand Street, Winooski, VT 05404  
(802) 655-3530  
bhoover@winooski.k12.vt.us

## Appendix B

# Assessment Rubric for the Twelve Principles\*

1	No action has been taken on this indicator.
2	We are beginning to address this indicator.
3	Our school has developed a strategy to address this indicator, and we have made substantial progress towards implementation.
4	Our school has fully adopted this strategy to address this indicator, and we continually adjust the implementation plan to improve its impact on quality learning.

Data Code	Principle 1: Engaged Learners – Students are engaged learners who are responsible for and actively involved in their own learning.	1	2	3	4
1.0	It is an expectation of the school community that students meet the Vital Results in <i>Vermont's Framework of Standards and Learning Opportunities</i> . The expectations of high academic achievement, active citizenship and preparation for career, life and work are stressed.				
1.1	Teachers and administrators have developed agreed upon strategies to assist students in becoming engaged learners.				
1.2	A sustainable system of professional development and support is present to provide teachers and administrators with the skills necessary to create and support environments where engaged learning is valued and evident.				
1.3	Staff members work together to create a learning environment in which students persist in their education, make informed choices, develop into competent problem-solvers and critical thinkers and are actively responsible for their own learning. This commitment is evident in the school's action plan.				
1.4	Avenues exist for students to use portfolios and exhibitions to demonstrate achievement of the Vital Results, Fields of Knowledge and Learning Opportunities outlined in <i>Vermont's Framework</i> .				
1.5	Opportunities exist for students to be involved in school leadership, including but not limited to committee work, teacher hiring, parent and family involvement in program design and input on policy.				
1.6	Plans exist to recruit and retain teachers and administrators who are interested in supporting the school's vision to personalize learning.				
1.7	Staff members work together to build a culture that results in the school being a desirable place to work.				
1.8	Comprehensive counseling programs that facilitate students' academic, social, personal and career development are in place and used.				
1.9	Student government plays a vital role in the school decision-making process. Students have opportunities to develop leadership skills.				
1.10	The school has implemented strategies to increase the number of students taking the SATs.				

\*Adapted from the United States Department of Education's New American High Schools Program.

Data Code	Principle 2: Challenging Standards – Each student is expected to demonstrate that he or she has met challenging standards based on <i>Vermont's Framework of Standards and Learning Opportunities</i> or national standards.	1	2	3	4
2.0	The curriculum is rigorous and aligned to state and national standards. Indicators of student performance and examples of work reflect that standards have been developed and met.				
2.1	Goals and objectives regarding challenging standards flow from the school's vision and are evident in the school's action plan.				
2.2	The school is replacing "general track" and "lower level" classes with courses containing rigorous academic content. Heterogeneous grouping for students is valued and supported.				
2.3	High universal expectations are supported by a variety of learning opportunities. Students demonstrate success in a variety of ways including meeting challenging standards through capstone projects, completing career academies, portfolio demonstration, passing Advanced Placement exams and successfully completing dual enrollment courses for college credit.				
2.4	School improvement efforts strongly support providing challenging academic opportunities for each student.				
2.5	The school uses performance-based assessments.				
2.6	Students successfully pass Advanced Placement exams.				
2.7	The school and students show evidence of meeting New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) standards.				

Data Code	Principle 3: Multiple Pathways – High schools provide each student with a variety of learning opportunities and multiple pathways to meet graduation requirements.	1	2	3	4
3.0	All students develop personal learning plans (PLPs) that include academic goals and the means to achieve them.				
3.1	PLPs are in place reflecting a pre-assessment of students' learning styles, interest inventories, aspirations, current skills and knowledge. PLPs are supported with an array of pathways to meet standards for graduation.				
3.2	The school has a written staff development plan, adjusted annually, which is data-driven and directly related to providing a variety of learning opportunities and multiple pathways for students to meet graduation requirements.				
3.3	Professional development assistance and special materials are provided to help teachers increase their focus on varied learning opportunities through personalized learning and the creation of multiple pathways.				
3.4	All students are able to demonstrate their learning with multiple methods including standardized assessments, student portfolios and demonstration projects. The use of portfolios, capstone projects and exhibitions are encouraged to demonstrate mastery of graduation requirements.				
3.5	Teachers, parents, business representatives and community members review projects and offer suggestions for continued student growth and development.				
3.6	Students can choose from a variety of methods to meet challenging graduation requirements.				
3.7	Students have access to alternative education programs. Dropout prevention, recovery and truancy programs are in place. Staff members are aware of these programs and make appropriate referrals.				
3.8	Transcript reviews take place in order to determine whether the student experience is rich and varied.				
3.9	The school is developing standards-based transcripts.				



Data Code	<b>Principle 4: Personalized Learning</b> – High schools create small, personalized and safe learning environments that provide students with stable support from adults, caring connections to mentors and a sense of belonging.				
		<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>
4.0	All students develop personal learning plans that include academic goals and the means to achieve them.				
4.1	The high school experience is appropriately constructed to ensure a successful transition to college, work and adulthood.				
4.2	Students have opportunities to develop post-high school plans that will contribute to smooth transitions to college, work and adulthood.				
4.3	Special senior-year programs are in place to make the final year of high school as productive and meaningful as possible.				
4.4	Procedures to support the establishment of transition programs from middle to high school exist locally. The school and district have transition plans from primary and middle grades to high school.				
4.5	Protocols exist to support multiple pathways to graduation beyond satisfying Carnegie units.				
4.6	Each student at this school is valued for his or her unique talents, interests and aspirations. Students are treated with respect.				
4.7	Each student has an adult member of the school community who serves to personalize that student's educational experience.				
4.8	Programs are in place within the community to regularly acknowledge and celebrate student success.				
4.9	Programs are in place to build awareness and appreciation of diversity and cultural issues.				

Data Code	<b>Principle 5: Flexible Structures</b> – High school schedules and organizations are flexible to allow time for varied instructional activities and to provide an integrated learning experience. Learning is the constant; time is the variable.				
		<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>
5.0	The school's mission statement clearly values flexible structures that support personalized learning.				
5.1	Curriculum and instruction are designed to support expectations for student learning.				
5.2	The schedule supports the school's mission and provides opportunities for off-campus learning.				
5.3	Time frames are adapted to accommodate learning activities.				
5.4	All students participate in several job shadowing or internship activities during high school.				

Data Code	<b>Principle 6: Real-Life Experiences</b> – Students learn about careers and college opportunities through real-life experiences and adult interaction, including work-based learning, service learning, career exploration, job shadowing and career academies.	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>
6.0	The school has established expectations for student learning that specifically state what all students should know and be able to do by the time they graduate. These expectations reflect the skills, competencies, concepts and understandings identified by district, state and national standards and by professional organizations.				
6.1	Each student in this school has the opportunity to nurture his or her individual talents and aspirations through applied learning, job shadowing, service learning and career exploration experiences.				
6.2	The school provides opportunities to extend student learning beyond traditional course offerings and the school campus.				
6.3	Teachers participate in experiences to build their knowledge of applied learning, engage in career exploration and use work-based learning and service learning as strategies to create varied learning opportunities and multiple pathways.				
6.4	The school has policies in place that support work-based learning and have risk management strategies in place, such as procedures for transporting students and ensuring proper insurance coverage. Teachers, students, staff, parents, business representatives and community members are aware of these policies.				

Data Code	<b>Principle 7: Instructional Leadership</b> – Adults in the school use research-based practices and effective administrative and instructional strategies to support increased student performance.	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>
7.0	The mission statement and expectations regarding instructional leadership guide the procedures, policies and decisions of the school and are evident in the school's culture.				
7.1	The school has a document developed by the faculty that defines the school's mission and academic expectations for student learning and has specific, measurable ways to indicate successful performance.				
7.2	Research-based professional development programs sustain, build, attract and retain effective, skilled administrators and teachers.				
7.3	The school has a demonstrated commitment to changing teaching pedagogy to increase student performance.				
7.4	Teachers receive professional development regarding high school renewal and innovation and the need to personalize learning for all students.				
7.5	Teachers with fewer than five years of classroom experience are given intensive support and supervision.				
7.6	Teachers view this school as a desirable place to work.				

Data Code	<b>Principle 8: Alignment</b> – Supported by research-based professional development, high schools align their curricula, instruction and assessment with Vermont's <i>School Quality Standards</i> .				
		<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>
<b>8.0</b>	The mission statement and expectations of the school are aligned with Vermont's <i>School Quality Standards</i> and guide the school's policies, procedures and decision-making process.				
<b>8.1</b>	The mission statement and expectations for student learning were developed by the school community and approved and supported by the faculty, the school board and any other schoolwide governing organization.				
<b>8.2</b>	The school uses a variety of data to regularly review the mission statement and expectations for student learning to assure that they reflect student needs, community expectations, the district mission and state standards.				
<b>8.3</b>	The content of the curriculum is intellectually rigorous and provides opportunities for the authentic application of knowledge and skills.				
<b>8.4</b>	The curriculum is integrated and aligned and emphasizes depth of understanding over breadth of coverage.				
<b>8.5</b>	The school has effective curricular coordination and articulation between and among all academic areas within the school as well as with district sending schools to ensure that expectations for student learning are addressed.				
<b>8.6</b>	Standardized assessments are aligned with college entrance requirements.				

Data Code	<b>Principle 9: Shared Purpose</b> – Every high school adopts and publicizes a compelling vision and mission that uses a results-oriented approach to promote continuous improvement.				
		<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>
<b>9.0</b>	The mission statement of the school is developed jointly by faculty, students, parents and community members. It represents the school community's fundamental values and beliefs about student learning and the purpose of the school and is consistent with or identical to the district's mission statement.				
<b>9.1</b>	The school's mission statement is clearly communicated and understood by all stakeholders and drives all significant school practices and policies.				
<b>9.2</b>	The school uses a variety of data for regular reviews of the mission statement and expectations for student learning to assure that they reflect student needs, community expectations, the district mission and state standards.				
<b>9.3</b>	Student exit interviews are used to evaluate students' satisfaction with their high school experiences and to give students the opportunity to make suggestions for improvement. A process for parental input is included.				
<b>9.4</b>	For planning purposes, the school collects data on post-high school activities and success rates of its graduates.				

Data Code	<b>Principle 10: Pre-K-16 Continuity</b> – Every high school is a member of a pre-K-16 education system and is a partner with middle schools, colleges and post-graduation training programs to help students make successful transitions.	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>
10.0	The school and district foster productive business/community/higher education partnerships to support student learning, ensure students enter the public school system with an appropriate level of readiness for school and assist students in making successful transitions to adulthood.				
10.1	Students have access to career academies, apprenticeships and dual enrollment opportunities. Articulation agreements with post-secondary institutions are in place.				
10.2	The school and district seek to build collaborative relationships to pool financial resources, share expertise and pursue outside sources of funding in order to support effective pre-K-16 systems.				
10.3	Secondary and post-secondary faculty members team-teach courses.				

Data Code	<b>Principle 11: Family Participation</b> – Families are active participants in their young adults' education and have varied opportunities to volunteer, serve on decision-making groups, assist students in setting learning goals, monitor results and support learning at home.	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>
11.0	The mission statement and expectations of family participation guide the procedures, policies and decisions of the school and are evident in the school's culture. Family advisory groups play active roles in the school culture.				
11.1	The faculty and staff engage students and their families as partners in education and encourage family participation in school programs and support groups.				
11.2	All parent conferences are conducted in a manner that facilitates family involvement in a student's educational experience.				
11.3	Students play an active role in parent/teacher conferences.				
11.4	Families are knowledgeable of school services and make appropriate use of those services.				

Data Code	<b>Principle 12: Community Partnerships</b> – Every high school forms active partnerships with families, community members, business people, civic leaders and policy-makers to ensure fiscal support and to expand student learning opportunities.	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>
12.0	School decisions, policies, procedures and district plans support community partnerships that expand student learning opportunities.				
12.1	The school has formed active partnerships, including dual enrollment and articulation agreements, with post-secondary institutions to expand student learning opportunities.				
12.2	The school works with local technical education centers, the Department of Employment and Training, the Department of Education, the Agency of Human Services, Workforce Investment Boards and other relevant parties to expand student learning opportunities and ensure development of the high-level skills necessary for workforce development.				
12.3	The school offers work-based learning experiences that include high school, business and post-secondary components.				
12.4	Service learning opportunities exist to enrich student learning and to meet community needs.				
12.5	Students participate in developmentally appropriate mentoring and School-to-Work programs.				
12.6	College students are involved in mentoring programs with secondary students.				
12.7	Secondary students are involved in mentoring programs with elementary and middle school students.				

# Cross Reference Table of the Twelve Principles, NEASC Standards and Vermont's School Quality Standards

Vermont High School Task Force: <i>High Schools on the Move</i> 12 Principles	New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) Standards	Vermont's School Quality Standards
<p><b>Principle 1: Engaged Learners</b> – Students are engaged learners who are responsible for and actively involved in their own learning.</p>	<p>2.4 The content of the curriculum shall be intellectually challenging, rigorous and provide opportunities for the authentic application of knowledge and skills.</p> <p>3.2 Instructional practices shall include practices that personalize instruction; make connections across disciplines; engage students as active self-directed learners; involve all students in higher order thinking to promote depth of understanding; and provide opportunities to demonstrate the application of knowledge and learning.</p> <p>5.5 Student grouping patterns shall reflect the diversity of the student body; foster heterogeneity and be consistent with the school's mission and expectations for student learning as well as current educational research.</p> <p>6.1 The school shall allocate resources, programs and services so that all students have an equal opportunity to achieve the school's stated academic expectations for student learning and to participate in the educational program.</p>	<p>2120.4 Needs-Based Professional Development</p> <p>2120.8 Conditions, Practices and Resources of Schools</p> <p>2120.8.1 School Leadership, Staffing and Support Services</p> <p>2120.8.1.1 School Leadership</p> <p>2120.8.1.3.1 Comprehensive System of Support Services; Educational Support Team</p> <p>2120.8.1.3.2 School Counselors</p> <p>2120.8.2 Staff</p> <p>2120.8.2.2 Instructional Practices</p> <p>2120.8.3 School Facilities and the Learning Environment</p> <p>2120.8.3.3 School Facilities and Learning Environment</p>
<p><b>Principle 2: Challenging Standards</b> – Each student is expected to demonstrate that he or she has met challenging standards based on <i>Vermont's Framework of Standards and Learning Opportunities</i> or national standards.</p>	<p>1.2 The school shall have established expectations for student learning that reflect the school's mission statement; identify high expectations for all students in academic, civic and social areas; specifically state what all students should know and be able to do by the time they graduate from the school taking into account the skills, competencies, concepts and understandings identified by district, state and national standards and by professional organizations.</p>	<p>2111 Adoption of Student Performance Standards and a System of Continuous Improvement in Student Performance</p> <p>2120.8.2.1 Graduation Requirements</p> <p>2120.8.2.2 Instructional Practices</p> <p>2120.2.2 Development and Implementation of Local Comprehensive Assessment System</p>

Vermont High School Task Force: <i>High Schools on the Move</i> 12 Principles	New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) Standards	Vermont's School Quality Standards
<p><b>Principle 2: Challenging Standards</b> – Each student is expected to demonstrate that he or she has met challenging standards based on <i>Vermont's Framework of Standards and Learning Opportunities</i> or national standards.</p>	<p>2.9 There shall be an ongoing review and evaluation of the curriculum that takes into account assessments of student performance in achieving the school's academic expectations for student learning.</p> <p>4.3 Teachers shall use a variety and range of classroom assessment strategies to determine student knowledge, skills and competencies to assess student growth over time.</p>	
<p><b>Principle 3: Multiple Pathways</b> – High schools provide each student with a variety of learning opportunities and multiple pathways to meet graduation requirements.</p>	<p>5.5 Student grouping patterns reflect the diversity of the student body, foster heterogeneity and are consistent with the school's mission and expectations for student learning as well as current educational research.</p>	<p>21206. Access to Technical Education</p> <p>2120.1 Action Plans</p> <p>2120.8.1.3.1 Comprehensive System of Support Services; Educational Support Team</p> <p>2120.8 Conditions, Practices and Resources of Schools</p> <p>2120.8.1.2 Staff</p> <p>2120.8.1.1 School Leadership</p> <p>2120.8.2.1 Graduation Requirements</p>
<p><b>Principle 4: Personalized Learning</b> – High schools create small, personalized and safe learning environments that provide students with stable support from adults, caring connections to mentors and a sense of belonging.</p>	<p>3.2 Instructional strategies shall include practices that personalize instruction; make connections across disciplines; engage students as active self-directed learners; involve all students in higher order thinking to promote depth of understanding; and provide opportunities to demonstrate the application of knowledge and learning.</p> <p>3.3 Teachers shall provide formal and informal opportunities for students to assess their own learning.</p> <p>7.7 The physical plant and facilities shall meet all applicable federal and state laws and be in compliance with local fire, health and safety regulations.</p> <p>6.3 Each student shall have an adult member of the school community who serves to personalize his or her educational experience.</p>	<p>2120.8.1.3 Support Services</p> <p>2120.8.1.3.1 Comprehensive System of Support Services; Educational Support Team</p> <p>2120.8.1.3.2 School Counselors</p> <p>2120.8.1.3.3 Health Services</p> <p>2120.8.1.3.4 Interagency Teams</p> <p>2120.8.2.1 Graduation Requirements</p> <p>2120.8.2.3 Curriculum Leadership, Content and Coordination</p> <p>2120.8.3.3 School Facilities and Learning Environment</p>

Vermont High School Task Force: <i>High Schools on the Move</i> 12 Principles	New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) Standards	Vermont's School Quality Standards
<p><b>Principle 5: Flexible Structures</b> – High school schedules and organizations are flexible to allow time for varied instructional activities and to provide an integrated learning experience. Learning is the constant; time is the variable.</p>	<p>2.6 The school shall provide opportunities to extend student learning beyond the normal course offerings and the school campus.</p> <p>5.6 The schedule shall support the school's mission and expectations for student learning and should be designed to provide the most effective implementation of curriculum and instruction.</p> <p>5.9 The school shall provide opportunities for teachers to collaborate within and across departments.</p> <p>5.5 Student grouping patterns shall reflect the diversity of the student body, foster heterogeneity and be consistent with the school's mission and expectations for student learning as well as current educational research.</p> <p>5.4 The organization and structure of the educational program shall promote the school's mission and expectations for student learning.</p>	<p>2120.6 Access to Technical Education</p> <p>2120.8.2.2 Instructional Practices</p> <p>2120.8.1.1 School Leadership</p> <p>2120.8.1.2 Staff</p>
<p><b>Principle 6: Real-Life Experiences</b> – Students learn about careers and college opportunities through real-life experiences and adult interaction, including work-based learning, service learning, career exploration, job shadowing and career academies.</p>	<p>7.2 The school shall foster productive business/community/higher education partnerships that support student learning.</p> <p>7.11 School board decisions, policies, procedures and district plans shall support the implementation of the school's mission and expectations for student learning.</p>	<p>2120.8.1.2 Staff</p> <p>2120.8.1.3.2 School Counselors</p> <p>2120.8.2.2 Instructional Practices</p>
<p><b>Principle 7: Instructional Leadership</b> – Adults in the school use research-based practices and effective administrative and instructional strategies to support increased student performance.</p>	<p>2.10 The school shall commit sufficient time, financial resources and personnel to the review and evaluation of curriculum.</p> <p>2.11 The professional staff shall be actively involved in the development and revision of the curriculum.</p> <p>2.12 Professional development activities shall support the development and implementation of the curriculum.</p> <p>3.4 Teachers shall use feedback from a variety of sources, such as other teachers, students, supervisors, and parents, as a means of improving instruction.</p>	<p>2111 Adoption of Student Performance Standards and a System of Continuous Improvement in Student Performance</p> <p>2120.1 Action Plans</p> <p>2120.2 Assessment</p> <p>2120.4 Needs-Based Professional Development</p> <p>2120.8 Conditions, Practices and Resources of Schools</p> <p>2120.8.1.2 Staff</p>

Vermont High School Task Force: <i>High Schools on the Move</i> 12 Principles	New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) Standards	Vermont's School Quality Standards
<p><b>Principle 7: Instructional Leadership</b> – Adults in the school use research-based practices and effective administrative and instructional strategies to support increased student performance.</p>	<p>3.6 Discussion of instructional strategies, practices and student work shall be a significant part of the professional culture of the school.</p> <p>3.7 Adequate time and financial resources shall be committed to ensuring the continuous improvement of instruction.</p> <p>4.3 Teachers shall use a variety and range of classroom assessment strategies to determine student knowledge, skills and competencies and to assess student growth over time.</p> <p>4.5 Teachers shall use the results of classroom assessments of student learning to improve their instructional practices.</p> <p>4.6 Teachers shall meet to discuss and share student work and the results of classroom assessments for the purpose of revising the curriculum and instructional strategies.</p> <p>5.11 Student success shall be regularly acknowledged, celebrated and displayed.</p>	
<p><b>Principle 8: Alignment</b> – Supported by research-based professional development, high schools align their curricula, instruction and assessment with Vermont's <i>School Quality Standards</i>.</p>	<p>1.2 The school shall have established expectations for student learning that reflect the school's mission statement; identify high expectations for all students in academic, civic and social areas; specifically state what all students should know and be able to do by the time they graduate from the school taking into account the skills, competencies, concepts and understandings identified by district, state and national standards and by professional organizations.</p> <p>4.8 The school's professional development programs shall provide opportunities for teachers to develop a broad range of assessment strategies for classroom use.</p> <p>5.9 The school shall provide opportunities for teachers to collaborate within and across departments.</p> <p>5.12 The climate of the school shall be positive, respectful and supportive, resulting in a sense of pride and ownership.</p>	<p>2111 Adoption of Student Performance Standards and a System of Continuous Improvement in Student Performance</p> <p>2120.1 Action Plans</p> <p>2120.2 Assessment</p> <p>2120.4 Needs-Based Professional Development</p> <p>2120.5 Staff Evaluation</p> <p>2120.8.2.2 Instructional Practices</p> <p>2120.8.2.3 Curriculum Leadership, Content and Coordination</p>



Vermont High School Task Force: <i>High Schools on the Move</i> 12 Principles	New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) Standards	Vermont's School Quality Standards
<p><b>Principle 9: Shared Purpose</b> – Every high school adopts and publicizes a compelling vision and mission that uses a results-oriented approach to promote continuous improvement.</p>	<p>1.2 The school shall have established expectations for student learning that reflect the school's mission statement; identify high expectations for all students in academic, civic and social areas; specifically state what all students should know and be able to do by the time they graduate from the school taking into account the skills, competencies, concepts and understandings identified by district, state and national standards and by professional organizations.</p> <p>5.4 The organization and structure of the educational program shall promote the school's mission and expectations for student learning.</p> <p>5.6 The schedule shall support the school's mission and expectations for student learning and should be designed to provide the most effective implementation of curriculum and instruction.</p> <p>5.12 The climate of the school shall be positive, respectful and supportive, resulting in a sense of pride and ownership.</p>	<p>2111 Adoption of Student Performance Standards and a System of Continuous Improvement in Student Performance</p> <p>2120.8.1.1 School Leadership</p> <p>2120.8.2.1 Graduation Requirements</p>
<p><b>Principle 10: Pre-K-16 Continuity</b> – Every high school is a member of a pre-K-16 education system and is a partner with middle schools, colleges and post-graduation training programs to help students make successful transitions.</p>	<p>7.1 The school shall engage students and their families as partners in the students' education as well as encourage their participation in school programs and parent support groups.</p> <p>7.2 The school shall foster productive business/community/higher education partnerships that support student learning.</p> <p>7.11 School board decisions, policies, procedures and district plans shall support the implementation of the school's mission and expectations for student learning.</p>	<p>2120.8.1.3 Support Services</p> <p>2120.8.1.3.2 School Counselors</p> <p>2120.2.2 Development and Implementation of Local Comprehensive Assessment System</p> <p>2120.8.1.3.4 Interagency Teams</p> <p>2120.8.2.3 Curriculum Leadership, Content and Coordination</p>

Vermont High School Task Force: <i>High Schools on the Move</i> 12 Principles	New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) Standards	Vermont's School Quality Standards
<p><b>Principle 11: Family Participation</b> – Families are active participants in their young adults' education and have varied opportunities to volunteer, serve on decision-making groups, assist students in setting learning goals, monitor results and support learning at home.</p>	<p>4.7 Teachers shall communicate to students and their families how student work and progress are being assessed.</p> <p>4.10 The administration and faculty shall use assessment data to determine student success in meeting the school's stated civic and social expectations and regularly report the findings to the public.</p> <p>5.1 The principal shall provide leadership in the school community by building and maintaining a vision, direction and focus for student learning.</p> <p>5.7 School leaders shall accord meaningful roles in the decision-making process to students, parents and staff members to promote an atmosphere of participation, responsibility and ownership.</p> <p>5.12 The climate of the school shall be positive, respectful and supportive, resulting in a sense of pride and ownership.</p> <p>6.7 Student support personnel shall enhance student learning by interacting and working cooperatively with professional and other staff and using community resources to address the academic, social, emotional and physical needs of students.</p> <p>6.8 There shall be a system for effective, ongoing communication with students, parents/guardians and school personnel designed to keep them informed about the types of available student support services and about identified student needs.</p>	<p>2120.8.1.1 School Leadership</p> <p>2120.2.2 Development and Implementation of Local Comprehensive Assessment System</p> <p>2120.3 Reports of Results</p>

Vermont High School Task Force: <i>High Schools on the Move</i> 12 Principles	New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) Standards	Vermont's School Quality Standards
<p><b>Principle 12: Community Partnerships</b> – Every high school forms active partnerships with families, community members, business people, civic leaders and policy-makers to ensure fiscal support and to expand student learning opportunities.</p>	<p>4.9 The administration and faculty shall use agreed upon levels of performance, indicators of successful accomplishment and other data to assess the progress of students in achieving the school's stated academic expectations for student learning and regularly report the findings to the public.</p> <p>4.10 The administration and faculty shall use assessment data to determine student success in meeting the school's stated civic and social expectations and regularly report the findings to the public.</p> <p>5.1 The principal shall provide leadership in the school community by building and maintaining a vision, direction and focus for student learning.</p> <p>5.7 School leaders shall accord meaningful roles in the decision-making process to students, parents and staff members to promote an atmosphere of participation, responsibility and ownership.</p> <p>5.12 The climate of the school shall be positive, respectful and supportive, resulting in a sense of pride and ownership.</p> <p>6.7 Student support personnel shall enhance student learning by interacting and working cooperatively with professional and other staff and using community resources to address the academic, social, emotional and physical needs of students.</p> <p>6.8 There shall be a system for effective, ongoing communications with students, parents/guardians and school personnel designed to keep them informed about the types of available student support services and about identified student needs.</p>	<p>2120.3 Reports of Results</p> <p>2120.8.2.3 Curriculum Leadership, Content and Coordination</p> <p>2120.8.1.2 Staff</p>



# School and Student Performance Data

## Standardized Tests

With implementation of the New Standards Reference Examinations (NSREs) in 1995, the Vermont Department of Education has been able to report school-specific assessment data. When the NSREs were implemented, the announced performance goal for all schools was that 80 percent of students should meet or exceed standards. On those 1995 exams, fewer than half of students tested (85 percent) met the standards in five of the seven categories tested. Scores have not shown significant improvement since the inception of NSRE testing.



Assessment Area Percentage of 10 <sup>th</sup> -graders Meeting or Exceeding Standards			
	1998-99 School Year	1999-00 School Year	2000-01 School Year
Mathematical Concepts	33%	36%	37%
Mathematical Problem Solving	27%	29%	34%
Mathematical Skills	53%	56%	59%
Reading/Basic Understanding	46%	45%	55%
Reading/Analysis and Interpretation	44%	42%	51%
Writing/Rhetorical Effectiveness	39%	38%	42%
Writing/Conventions	76%	75%	73%

In 2000, a much higher percentage of Vermont high school students took the Scholastic Achievement Test (SAT) than is typical nationwide—70 percent versus 44 percent nationally—which placed Vermont fifth in the nation for student SAT participation. Higher participation rates are strongly correlated with lower scores; the College Board speculates that highly motivated, academically strong students make up a higher percentage of test takers in states with low SAT participation.

Vermont's combined verbal and mathematic average score of 1021 was only slightly higher than the national average of 1019. However, when Vermont was compared to all other states with a participation rate of 60 percent or higher, the State ranked third highest in combined average scores in 2000.

Statewide 2000 Advanced Placement (AP) exam scores were also slightly above the national average: on a scoring scale of 1 (lowest score) to 5 (highest score), almost 69 percent of Vermont exams were scored at 3 or higher. This was an increase of 3 percent over the prior year and compared to 64 percent nationally. (Participation rates for AP exams are not available for comparison.)



## Decision: College Versus Career

According to the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation's senior survey of the Class of 1999, 75.8 percent of post-secondary bound students had made the decision to pursue higher education by the 10<sup>th</sup> grade. Ninety-four percent of seniors with an A average and 74.7 percent with a B average planned to continue their education immediately after high school.

By comparison, 57.5 percent of career-bound seniors made the decision not to continue their education after their final year in high school. Sixty percent of these career-bound seniors planned to pursue some form of post-secondary education in the future, with 45.2 percent expecting to enroll sometime within the next year. The majority of seniors with a C average or below had no immediate plans to continue their education.

Females, college bound seniors and seniors with a grade point average of B or better tended to rate their high school instruction better than did males, career-bound seniors or seniors with a grade point average of C or below.

### Post-secondary attendance

In 1998, 49.8 percent of Vermont high school graduates actually enrolled in college. More than half of these students (53.6 percent) left Vermont to attend college, the third highest migration rate in the country.

### Dropout rate

An "event" dropout rate is the type of rate that has typically been collected and reported in Vermont and nationally for years. The event rate describes the percentage of students who drop out from grades 9 through 12 in a given year. For a number of years, this rate has consistently remained at 4 percent to 5 percent.

A more descriptive approach is to track the proportion of students who enter high school in 9<sup>th</sup> grade and do not graduate – this is called a cohort rate. The Vermont Department of Education's first report of cohort dropout rates, issued in 2000 shows that roughly one out of five Vermont students entering 9<sup>th</sup> grade drops out of the cohort group.

#### Estimated Vermont Cohort Dropout Rate: 1999-2001

1999:	17.9 percent
2000:	19.1 percent
2001:	18.5 percent

# Community Issues

## Incarceration of our youth

Ninety-five percent of incarcerated youth ages 16 to 22 do not have a high school diploma; most dropped out in 9<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> grade. Of this percentage, about half have special education histories. Incarcerated youth fall within the bottom 20<sup>th</sup> percentile range on basic skill testing, according to the Wide Range Achievement Test. It costs about \$24,000 per bed per year to house an incarcerated youth.

## Risk behavior

While high schools cannot and should not be responsible for all aspects of a student's life, the risk behavior of students affects the learning environment. According to the 2001 Vermont Youth Risk Behavior Survey:

- Suicide plans are decreasing. Overall, 13 percent of students have made a suicide plan during the past 12 months, compared to 16 percent in 1999, 18 percent in 1997 and 22 percent in 1995.
- Sixty-nine percent of students have consumed alcohol (more than a few sips), ten percent binged on alcohol on three or more days during the past 30 days. Binge drinking is defined as having five or more drinks of alcohol within a couple of hours.
- Drug use is related to suicide, early and unwanted pregnancy, school failure, delinquency and transmission of sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV. One out of four American adolescents is estimated to be at very high risk for the consequences of alcohol and other drug problems.
- Following a decade of decline, marijuana use has begun to rebound. More than one-quarter of students have tried marijuana. Overall, 26 percent of students have used marijuana during the past 30 days.
- Overall, 8 percent of students reported smoking tobacco daily. Tobacco use, which accounts for one of every five deaths in the United States, is the most preventable cause of death.
- Fourteen percent of students have tried inhalants. Inhalant use is the deliberate inhalation or sniffing of common products, such as glues and cleaners, or some gases intended for medical or dental purposes to obtain a "high."
- Seven percent of students have used cocaine
- Twenty six percent of students reported being offered, sold or given an illegal drug on school property.







# How to Use This Document for Community Dialogue

## Organizing a Community Dialogue

**Dialogue not debate.** Developing the shared purpose of the Twelve Principles requires that each community member has an opportunity to hear and understand the views, concerns and desires of others. That's why we suggest that the secondary school renewal process begins with a community dialogue. Free and open dialogue, incorporating give and take among members of a community, increases a group's understanding of the ideas presented. Debate, on the other hand, where sides are staked out early and opponents attack one another, divides communities.

**Facilitation.** Consider using experienced facilitators for group discussions. Community members who fulfill this role may be educators, planners, trainers, business people or personnel from social service organizations.

**Use small groups; review one chapter at a time.** It is difficult to grasp all of the ideas in this report in one sitting or through individual review and study. We suggest talking about one section at a time in small groups using the guidelines described below.



### Text-Based Discussion Guidelines

- A. Group members read a section of the report before meeting
- B. Group members establish ground rules for the discussion, such as:
  - Listen actively
  - Build on what others say
  - Expose or suspend assumptions
  - Silence and pauses are okay
  - Converse honestly; there is no need to go through the facilitator
  - Let the conversation flow as much as possible without raising hands or using a speakers list
  - Emphasize clarification, amplification and implications of ideas
  - Refer to the text; challenge others to refer to the text
  - Watch your own "air time," both in terms of how often you speak, and in terms of how much you say when you do
- C. Conclude the one- to two-hour dialogue with a written summary of ideas that could work in the school



## Talking About the Report

### Chapter One: A Call to Action

The Task Force outlines what is at stake in secondary education in Vermont and why communities should join the effort to renew and improve our schools.

#### **Suggested discussion questions:**

- What is the meaning and purpose of education?
- How widespread is concern about the quality of our secondary schools?
- What are the concerns of students and faculty?
- What is your response to the call for reform?
- What challenges do we face if we try to significantly reform our secondary schools?
- Where does responsibility fall for leading the effort?
- Where will leadership come from?

### Chapter Two: Twelve Principles for High School Renewal

The values and beliefs described in this chapter support the Task Force's recommendations.

The Assessment Rubric for the Twelve Principles outlined in Appendix B provides indicators for each of the Twelve Principles. Using these indicators to assess your high school will give you a picture of how far along your school may be toward implementing a Principle. Therefore, completing this survey as a group is a possible method for organizing the discussion. Small groups could take one Principle and its set of indicators for review, or a larger group could review the Principles and indicators in sequence.

For a more general discussion, begin each faculty, board or PTA meeting with a dialogue around one Principle. Each Principle should evoke a rich dialogue about the meaning and purpose of schooling. The groups can also review the related effective practices (specific programs in schools that fulfill the vision of the Principle) to further enrich understanding of a Principle's impact on a school.

#### **Suggested discussion questions:**

- In what ways does the mission/vision/belief statement of your school support or conflict with these Principles?
- What would these Principles look like in practice?
- In what ways would your school look and feel different if these Principles were implemented?
- What would it take to improve the school's performance as assessed by the indicators?
- Which Principles would be easiest to implement, given the current culture and the institutional history of your high school? Why?

- Which Principles would be more difficult to implement? Why?
- Make your own list of the Principles in order of priority for your high school.

## Chapter Three: Current Realities: Secondary Education, Schools and Communities

The data outlined in this chapter provide a background for the community's dialogue about Vermont's secondary schools.

### Suggested discussion questions:

- Does this picture of public education in Vermont represent the current reality in your community?
- In what ways is your school data the same or different from state averages?
- What other data do you have about your school's resources and about student and teacher performance and satisfaction?
- Of the observations and challenges presented, which are of particular interest or concern in your school? Why?
- What do students say about this current reality?
- Do different members of the community (e.g., students, faculty, parents) find some of the data more compelling or interesting than others? Why?



## Chapter Four: Effective Practices for Initiating Change

While many school districts in Vermont are using effective approaches to elevate student performance, the examples in this chapter were chosen to clearly demonstrate how the Twelve Principles can be put into practice.

Groups wanting more detail on these practices or wanting to find supporting evidence will find the bibliography and the Examples of Effective Practices (Appendix A) helpful. One method for organizing this discussion is to provide groups with a selection of readings or a guest resource person who can lead discussion about one of the effective practices.

### Suggested discussion questions:

- Do you have any of these practices in place now?
- What are the responses of students, faculty, parents and employer-partners to these practices?
- Why did the school decide to implement a particular practice?
- What did you learn during implementation that could make the next process smoother?
- Are any elements of any of the practices already in place?
- Which practices support your priority Principles? Compare practices that support your priorities.
- Do some practices seem easier to sell to the community?
- What steps are necessary to implement any of these practices?



## Chapter Five: Practices to Consider Phasing Out

This chapter outlines practices that are no longer useful in secondary schools. If we are serious about fulfilling the Twelve Principles and implementing effective practices, these ineffective practices must be retired.

This chapter may tempt members of the group to move from dialogue to debate. While schools are continuously asked to embrace new ideas, they may have a difficult time letting go of the old ways of doing business. However, the traditions of the secondary institution need to be seriously challenged if we are to fulfill the promise of providing the world class education that every Vermont student deserves.

### Suggested discussion questions:

- What would you like to see phased out in your school?
- Are there policies, practices or traditions that do not support your central purpose or mission?
- Bearing in mind the Principles that you believe should be your early priorities, which outdated practices should be the first to go from your school?

## Chapter Six: Conclusion

This chapter reflects on Vermont's readiness to embrace long-term, systemic secondary school change. Vermont's change strategy is discussed and the current state of the change effort is reviewed. The seven themes that emerged from the work of the Task Force with students and youths are listed. Final thoughts regarding the need for high school reform are offered. Readers can use this chapter as an entry point into discussion about the high school reform change process.

A self-assessment tool, the Assessment Rubric for the Twelve Principles, is included in Appendix B. Each discussion group could be responsible for one category of questions on a self-assessment tool. Results could be reported back to all groups for further dialogue, or all groups could review the same assessment category and compare results. There should be a process for developing a consensus on the entire self-assessment.

Next steps would include revisiting Chapter 2 for each Principle needed to address a school's weak areas. This stage of the dialogue should focus on which actions would improve the school's performance on the assessment for a given Principle, which obstacles are expected, what support or resources are available, etc.

Groups can also revisit Chapter 4 to identify effective practices that support priority Principles. Chapter 5 will help you to identify the undesirable practices that may be responsible for low performance; it also suggests effective practices to consider in their place. Discussion groups can also consider how to use the remaining tools offered in this report in their schools and communities.

**Suggestions discussion questions:**

- How will your school and community work together to personalize the high school experience through changing the structure of your high school?
- Where is your high school and community in terms of its readiness to embrace high school reform?
- How could you envision connecting to The Center for High School Renewal and Innovation and the High Schools on the Move network?
- How would the lives of secondary students and youth in your community change if the seven themes that they identified were implemented and achieved?
- What barriers to high school reform must be eliminated in your school and community to make high school renewal a reality?

**Appendix G: Recommendations and Challenges**

Because of the importance of the recommendations and challenges offered by the Task Force, suggested discussion questions for Appendix G are included in this section.

**Suggestions discussion questions:**

- How do district policies and procedures make it difficult to implement the Principles or effective practices?
- How does the contract negotiated with teachers affect implementation?
- What impact do the recommendations have on certification, graduation requirements and other state laws and rules?
- What impact does funding (both the current process of funding and the amount of funding) have on the entire school improvement process? How can state policy-makers be convinced to make the changes necessary to support high school renewal?



# Kids Speak: Organizing a Fishbowl Session

This is the script used by the High School Task Force to conduct fishbowl sessions with students. It easily can be adapted for use by anyone acting as moderator of a fishbowl session with students, adults or educators.

In a fishbowl session, participants sit in a circle along with a facilitator. Observers, who sit in a concentric circle surrounding the participants, do not participate in the discussion unless they are invited to introduce themselves. The purpose of the fishbowl is to allow the participants to express themselves, to engage in dialogue together and to allow the observers to listen to and personally reflect on what the participants are saying.



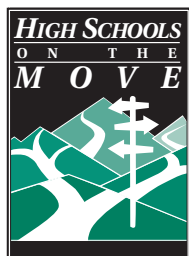
## Script for Kids Speak fishbowl session

### 1. Welcome to Kids Speak:

- Facilitator: This is a focused forum designed to provide some of our area high school students with an opportunity to speak candidly about their hopes and dreams, their concerns about the future and their attitudes and assessments regarding their relationships with adults ...

### 2. Introductions:

- The facilitator introduces himself or herself and states his or her reason for wanting to facilitate the session. Usually, the facilitator includes some personal information about himself or herself of interest to high school students.
- Facilitator to students: Please tell us your name, your year in school and the high school that you attend.
- Facilitator to students and audience: Let's find out who our observers are. We've invited parents, teachers, administrators, employers and others to join us today. Please introduce yourselves.



### 3. Format

- Facilitator: In this session, we will follow a fishbowl format.
- If you are familiar with a fishbowl format, you know that the participants in the inner circle are the only folks who engage in the discussion. For students in the circle, your task is to engage freely in the discussion. The parameters are to try and keep your comments focused, clean and honest but respectful. The role of those of you on the outside ring is to silently observe, listen and learn from what these young people have to offer. I will remind you that the deepest learning comes from trying to understand the perspective of the speaker.
- I will serve as the facilitator and the students will do most of the talking. I have a list of questions that we will use to get the ball rolling and then we will see where the discussion takes us. Once we get started, I will put a question on the floor and invite any student to comment.
- After the first round of questions, I will provide the observers with an opportunity to pose a question to me for possible inclusion in the second round of the discussion. Any questions about format?

### 4. Think, pair, share:

- Facilitator: I want to start the discussion by asking each of you to take a minute and think about this question: *If you could create your version of the ideal high school what would it look like, and how would you describe the relationships that would exist between students and adults?*
- Take a minute or two to share your thoughts with the person beside you. Then we will open it up for a general discussion.

### Questions for general discussion:

- A. When you think about the ideal adult relationships you described, how does that image stack up with your current reality?
- B. Believe it or not, everybody wants to know what high school kids are thinking about these days? Let's start off with a positive focus, what are some of your dreams for the future and how are the adults in your life helping you to take steps to realize those dreams?
- C. From your point of view, what is really working well in high school, what should we be doing more of?
- D. Many students tell me that "high school is a joke" Is there an element of truth to that statement? If so, how so? Can we do anything about it?



**E.** Approximately one in five Vermont High School students will not graduate with the same students they started with as freshman. In your opinion, why do students drop out, fall behind their peers or transfer to other schools?

**Let's shift gears:**

**F.** For the past two years, what students told me they wanted most from the adults in their lives was mutual respect. They wanted to feel like they were known and valued for who they were as individuals, not just for their membership in a group, a class or an achievement level. How are the adults in your lives measuring up on that scale?

**G.** What do *you* need and want most from your adult relationships?

**H.** Complete this sentence....."The one thing I wish adults would try to understand about high school kids is....."

**I.** Do you feel that you belong in your school? Do you feel valued and respected in your community? If not, what suggestions do you have to change this situation?

**J.** If the adults in your life really valued your uniqueness, what would that look like and feel like? Use any context that makes sense, i.e. school, work, sports, family, etc.

**End of round one. (Take a stretch break. Entertain any questions the audience would like to pose.) Get student input: What else would you like to talk about today?**

**K.** Do you feel psychologically and physically safe in your high school? Describe adult behavior that can contribute or detract from a safe environment?

**L.** Is school violence an issue in Vermont? If so, what steps should we take to address it, if not, what should we do to prevent it from becoming an issue in our schools?

**M.** In your opinion, what role should parents play in the decisions that high school students make about their friends, the courses they take and how they choose to spend their free time?

**N.** If you had to give the adults in your life a grade for the level of support that they are providing you, what would the grade be, and what suggestions would you give them to improve their performance?

**O.** Who are your heroes? What does someone have to do to get on your list? Is a hero automatically a role model?

**P.** Should heroes be forgiven when they fall from grace? How does disappointing behavior on the part of adult's effect your view of them as role models?





**Q.** Think about a recent or past incident that was covered in the media, in which you came away feeling disappointed or ashamed about the way in which adults had behaved. Why did you feel let down?

**R.** How many of you watch “Reality TV” (survivor etc)? What do you think about the behavior you witness? Based on your core values, what type of individual would you vote off the Island, kick out of the house, or reject for the big date and why?

**S.** What are the two or three biggest challenges that young people are facing today? What can adults do to help you meet these challenges in a constructive and healthy manner?

**Group/partner task:**

**T.** If you were named to the Governor’s youth council, and he asked for your advice on how best to spend \$1 million dollars for youth development and youth services, what advice would you give him?

➡ Fishbowls were conducted by Bob Stanton, Assistant Superintendent, Lamoille South Supervisory Union. If you would like to know more about the fishbowl process, please contact him at (802) 888-4541.

## *We Believe:*

# Recommendations from the Vermont High School Task Force



1. Schools need to develop long-term plans to implement the Twelve Principles identified by the High School Task Force.
2. Schools need to work to develop a culture of continuous improvement, consistently evaluating and improving effectiveness of their activities.
3. A review of rules, state policies, legislation and employment contracts must be conducted to identify necessary modifications that will allow for implementation of the Twelve Principles.
4. Schools should adopt achievement of the standards outlined in *Vermont's Framework of Standards and Learning Opportunities* as a graduation requirement and allow students to demonstrate achievement through rigorous multiple measures and challenging pathways.
5. Schools should avoid the use of high stakes testing as a route for assessing student achievement.
6. Schools should implement an array of standards-based graduation requirements such as content-area courses, independent studies, portfolios, NSREs, dual enrollment options, capstone or senior projects and community- and work-based experiences.
7. Schools need to redesign their courses and learning experiences to allow students to create evidence that they have met the standards in Vermont's *Framework*.
8. Vermont schools need to develop and implement a standards-based transcript that is useful to the student and his or her family, post-secondary institutions and employers as a record of a student's accomplishments and skills.
9. Schools should identify and provide supports for students to ensure success early in their education.



10. Schools need to support and expand students' aspirations by providing each student with access to an effective support system.
11. Communities need to engage in the process of high school renewal and to develop local and community structures that provide each student with meaningful adult support.
12. Communities should develop multi-year plans that outline how they will phase out practices that inhibit high school graduation and that suggest practices to replace them with elements of the Twelve Principles.
13. Communities and schools need to work together to ensure that organized learning experiences for students exist throughout a community.
14. Clearly articulated educational initiatives and educational tools must exist and be used for school improvement.
15. Schools should strive to develop leadership that values connectivity and collaboration to meet the needs of each student.
16. Support systems for school leaders that promote consistency in leadership and provide tools to support and manage change need to be developed.
17. Schools need sustainable funding plans to support implementation of the Twelve Principles.
18. Structures and supports that give each student access to meaningful adults must be created.
19. Achievement should be fostered through rigorous standards and challenging pathways not through high stakes testing.
20. Efforts to support truancy and dropout prevention through valuing each student and his or her aspirations and interests should be developed; early identification, intervention and support become priorities.
21. Collaborative efforts, such as developing coordinated interagency services that will help all Vermont youth transition successfully to adulthood and significantly lower the dropout rate, must be developed and implemented. These efforts would engage resources of various partners such as the Department of Education, Department of Employment and Training, Economic Development, Agency of Human Services, Human Resources Investment Council (HRIC), Workforce Investment Boards (WIB), HRIC Youth Council and other interested parties.

# Challenges

**Challenge:** To continue to raise the proportion of students graduating and to graduate youth who are at risk or who are no longer in our schools; to increase the value of a high school diploma by ensuring that all graduates can perform at skill and knowledge levels described in *Vermont's Framework of Standards and Learning Opportunities*.

**Challenge:** To know well and to value every student and her or his learning style, needs, and aspirations; to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse youth population living in communities that may be unaccustomed to change.

**Challenge:** To ensure access to personalized learning for all students regardless of socioeconomic background, gender or educational history without overtaxing the fiscal and human resources of our secondary schools.

**Challenge:** To develop meaningful, effective and economical models for rigorous statewide assessments of student performance that recognize the unique characteristics of students and school districts while promoting mastery of Vermont's standards.

**Challenge:** To provide leadership, resources and conditions for students, educators and parents in all Vermont communities that will offer students varied opportunities to master Vermont's standards and to achieve their own personal learning goals; to permit achievement of the goal of statewide standards-based graduation; to ensure alignment of learning goals through a pre-K-16 continuum in each community.

**Challenge:** To authentically engage students, teachers and parents in learning experiences that are rigorous and that students find relevant to their current needs and future ambitions.

**Challenge:** To develop systems for students and their parents to make important decisions about current educational activities and future goals and to encourage participation in shaping school procedures that significantly affect student learning.

**Challenge:** To incorporate post-secondary achievement data into the pre-K-12 assessment framework; to use that data to develop support systems and learning opportunities throughout the transitional years that will assist every Vermont youth in preparing for a productive and fulfilling life.

**Challenge:** To focus the primary resources and energies of every Vermont secondary school on learning, which is its most central mission; to refocus school activities to serve the central mission coherently; to validate multiple accountability systems and requirements imposed on our schools.





## Appendix H

# High School Task Force Members

### Steering Committee Members

**Robert Stanton, Ed.D.**

Assistant Superintendent  
Lamoille South Supervisory Union

**Ellen Keane**

Former Superintendent  
Addison Northwest Supervisory Union

**Armando Vilaseca**

Principal  
Essex High School

**Andrea Silva McManus**

High School Renewal and Innovation Coordinator  
Vermont Department of Education

### Task Force Members

**Lia Cravedi-Cheng**

Secondary Education Program Coordinator  
University of Vermont

**John Clarke**

Teacher Quality Enhancement Project  
Vermont Institute for Science, Math and Technology  
(VISMT)

**Dwight Davis**

Executive Director  
Vermont Independent Schools Association

**Nancy Disenhaus**

Teacher  
U-32 Junior-Senior High School

**Doug Dows**

Safe and Healthy Schools Director  
Vermont Department of Education

**Michele Forman**

2001 Vermont and National Teacher of the Year  
Middlebury Union High School Teacher

**Issac Evans-Frantz**

Student  
State Board of Education Member

**Geof Hewitt**

Writing/Secondary English Consultant  
Vermont Department of Education

**Dot Higgin**

Teacher  
U-32 Junior-Senior High School

**Wendy Hovey**

School Improvement Coordinator  
Vermont Department of Education

**Miranda Jones**

Student  
State Board of Education Member

**Sue Burton Kelly**

IBM/teacher

**Jennifer Kempf**

Teacher Associate  
VISMT

**Karen Kurzman**

Language Art and Assessment Consultant  
Vermont Department of Education

**Marian Lawlor**

Program Manager for Educational Outreach  
IBM

**Tom Longstreth**

Executive Director  
Recycle North

**Jim Masland**

Vermont State Legislator

**Jack McCarthy**

Superintendent  
Franklin Northwest Supervisory Union

**Thomas O. McConnell**

Teacher  
Essex High School

**Ed McGuire**

Horizons Program Coordinator  
Mt. Abraham Union High School

**Joey McNabb**  
Educational Support Team  
Vermont Department of Education

**Edie Miller**  
Executive Director  
Vermont School Boards Association

**Robin Morton**  
Executive Director  
Vermont Chamber of Commerce Business Education  
Partnership

**Bob Pasco**  
Secondary Education  
Saint Michael's College

**Linda Shiller**  
Director of Outreach  
Vermont Student Assistance Cooperation

**Greg Voorheis**  
Special Assistant to the Commissioner  
Vermont Department of Employment and Training

**Karrin Wilks**  
Vice President for Academic and Strategic Planning  
Vermont State Colleges

## **Additional Contributors**

A special thanks to the numerous Vermont high school students and youth who participated in the fishbowl sessions and informed our work.

**Jeannie Crosby**  
Former State School-to-Work Director

**Val Gardner**  
Principal  
Champlain Valley Union High School

**Bob Jones**  
Principal  
Oxbow Union High School

**Jeanne Keller**  
Keller and Fuller, Inc.

**Tom Leever**  
Chair  
Human Resources Investment Council

**Deb Marrow**  
Consultant  
Dropout Prevention and Recovery

**Bette Matowski**  
Former Regional Director  
Community College of Vermont

**Mary Moran**  
Superintendent  
Rutland City School District

**George Salembier**  
Associate Professor Secondary and Special Education  
University of Vermont

**Jeb Spaulding**  
Former Career and Workforce Development Director  
Vermont Department of Education

**Charles Stander**  
Acting Director, Career and Workforce  
Development Team  
Vermont Department of Education

**Hank Stopinski**  
Director  
River Valley Technical Education Center

**Elizabeth Swift**  
Home Schooling Parent

**Fran Toomey**  
Education Faculty  
Saint Michael's College

**Doug Walker**  
Deputy Commissioner  
Vermont Department of Education

**Fran Weinbaum**  
Coordinator  
Vermont Consortium for Successful High School  
Completion

## **Editors**

**John Clarke**  
Teacher Quality Enhancement Project  
Vermont Institute for Science, Math and Technology  
(VISMT)  
& Northeast and Islands Regional Educational  
Laboratory at Brown University

**Geof Hewitt**  
Vermont Department of Education

**Holly Lane**  
Vermont Department of Education

**Peter Thoms**  
Vermont Department of Education



## Appendix I

# Glossary of Terms

### Advanced Placement (AP)

Demanding academic curriculum through which high schools offer college-level courses to their students. By taking an AP course and scoring well on the national exam, high school students may acquire college credit for mastering college-level subjects.

### Advisories

Regularly scheduled meetings between teachers and students that cover a continuum of possibilities from serving as a touchstone for students to create caring environments in school to personalizing a student's course of study.

### Block scheduling

A means of reconfiguring the school day. The traditional school day is typically divided into six or seven classes, each lasting from 45 minutes to 55 minutes. With few exceptions, classroom instruction begins and ends within the allotted time period. Blocked courses may be scheduled for two or more continuous class periods or days to allow students greater time for laboratory or project-centered work, field trips or work-based learning and special assemblies or speakers.

### Capstone project

A multi-stage project that allows a student to integrate learning from a variety of settings and sources while demonstrating mastery of Fields of Knowledge and Personal Skills identified in *Vermont's Framework of Standards and Learning Opportunities*. A capstone project provides students with the opportunity to develop a sound work ethic, high academic achievement, effective social skills, good citizenship and a sense of altruism that leads to informed decision-making and responsible action. Sometimes called a graduation challenge.

### Center or network for high school renewal and innovation

Clearinghouse supporting field-based research, policy development, local and state renewal initiatives and best practices that increase the ability of each high school in Vermont to adopt the Twelve Principles for High School Renewal. This resource will support the dissemination and implementation of *High Schools on the Move: Renewing Vermont's Commitment to Quality Secondary Education* and will actively support the High Schools on the Move initiative.

### Community-based learning coordinator

A person located in a school who coordinates community learning opportunities, job shadows and internships for students and sometimes teachers.

### Community dialogue night

A forum for interested students, teachers, parents, administrators, district staff and business leaders to use *High Schools on the Move: Renewing Vermont's Commitment to Quality Secondary Education* to discuss the current state of a high school.





## **Community service learning**

Learning that occurs while performing service. Service learning activities define a problem in the community and develop a solution to the problem; all related activities are tied to the curriculum in school.

## **Community service**

Performing service to a community for its betterment.

## **Compact**

A formal agreement among leaders to work together for local educational reform. Compact representatives may include community decision-makers, school superintendents, college presidents and heads of business organizations as well as superintendents, principals, teachers, parents and unions. Compacts provide a structure of mutual accountability because all participants agree to work together and individually to support group goals. Efforts on the part of compact members may include creating employment opportunities for students, helping to restructure educational systems and providing local labor market information. The Boston Compact was formed in 1982 by business leaders who felt they could help raise the quality of high school graduates; they approached local authorities and educators with a proposal for school reform. In exchange for districtwide improvements in student academic performance and a reduction in the total dropout rate, business leaders promised to increase jobs and college assistance to high school graduates.

## **Dual enrollment**

A program of study allowing high school students to simultaneously earn credits toward a high school diploma and a post-secondary degree or certificate. Written agreements formalize the outcome of studies undertaken.

## **Educational support system (ESS)**

A comprehensive set of supports and services that is integrated with the general education curriculum. ESS is found at both the state and local levels. The system is designed to provide students with needed accommodations and supplementary aids and services regardless of their eligibility for categorical programs. The goal is to increase to the greatest extent possible the capacity of general educators to meet diverse student needs in the classroom and to avoid over-reliance on special education services.

## **Education support team (EST)**

Team that includes a variety of teaching and support personnel who assist teachers in planning and providing services and accommodations for students in need of classroom supports or enrichment activities in order to meet state and local standards. ESTs also gather data and identify patterns to inform the school's action plan to strengthen the overall capacity of an ESS. See also educational support system.

## **Effective practices**

Research-based, proven practices.

## **Fishbowl**

A facilitated discussion that allows students to respond to the question: “If you could create your version of the ideal high school, what would it look like?” Students talk openly and honestly about their feelings regarding high school. Students sit in a circle of chairs surrounded by an outer circle of observers, creating a fishbowl effect.

## **Graduation challenge**

Varies between schools, but generally provides students with a culminating senior-year project. See also capstone projects.

## **High Schools on the Move**

A network of high schools serving as multiple demonstration sites for systemic change in Vermont high schools. These high schools will provide a showcase to highlight effective practices linked to the Twelve Principles.

## **Internship**

An opportunity for a student to work for an employer for a specified period to learn about a particular industry or occupation. Activities may include special projects, a sample of tasks from different jobs or tasks from a single occupation. Internships may or may not include financial compensation.

## **Teacher internships**

Worksite experiences of at least two weeks in duration for teachers. During this time, teachers may work at a particular position to learn about the skills necessary for success in that field. Links are then made to instructional practice.

## **Met School**

A small public high school open to all students in Rhode Island. It educates one student at a time, so each student’s curriculum is determined by his or her unique interests, background and learning styles. All students work on projects in real-world settings related to their interests and develop strong relationships with teachers and project mentors. The Met enrolls families, not just students. Every Met graduate has been accepted to college. Learn more from the *Met Portfolio*, the book *One Kid at a Time*, and the video *Learning Journeys*.

## **Personalized learning plan (PLP)**

Recognizes the individuality of student learning styles, histories, interests and aspirations and allows the student, in concert with school staff and family members, to individualize the learning experience and demonstrate readiness for the adult world. Because of the central role each student fulfills in the construction of his or her own PLP, the student’s own ambitions, talents and interests become the unifying elements of the learning process. PLPs encompass anywhere from one year to all four years of high school and the experience and impact is far deeper than a series of single events, such as job shadowing or other work-based or community-based learning experiences.





### **Personalized learning**

Recognizes the individuality of student learning styles, histories, interests and aspirations allowing the student, in concert with school staff and his or her family, to individualize the learning experience and to demonstrate his or her readiness for the adult world.

### **Pre-K-16 continuity**

Coordination from kindergarten through post-secondary education to ensure Vermonters have access to education and training opportunities that will help them build sound economic and civic futures.

### **School Improvement Team**

Team at the Vermont Department of Education available to assist schools identified for technical assistance with school improvement efforts.

### **School-to-Work (STW)**

A program that provides a means of attaining high academic standards. To help students direct their own educations, STW encourages, among other things, exposure to a broad variety of career options – starting with speakers and field trips in elementary school and progressing to academically connected internships in a high school student's field of interest. The underlying goal is to provide students with knowledge and skills that help them be well prepared for college, additional training or a well-paying job directly out of high school.

### **Teacher leader groups**

Groups of teachers learning and working together to improve their skills and capacities to educate students.

### **Twelve Principles for High School Renewal**

A set of principles drawn from more than 18 research-based models of whole school reform for high schools and around which schools may organize their leadership, instruction, professional development, missions and structures.

### **Vermont Interactive Learning Network (VT ILN)**

An interactive learning network designed to broaden learning opportunities for students and teachers by connecting schools throughout the state. Sponsored by Verizon.

### **Vermont Standards Board for Professional Educators (VSBPE)**

Board that develops the standards that Vermont educators are expected to meet for licensure.

# Bibliography

American Institute of Research, Education Research Search. *Educators Guide to School Wide Reform*. 1999.

Boyer E. *High School: A Report on Secondary Education in America*. Carnegie Foundation of the Advancement of Teaching, 1983.

Clarke, J. "Planting and Growing the Seeds of Reform." *National Association of Secondary Principals Bulletin*, April 1999.

Clarke, J. "Teaching Each and All: Harnessing Dynamic Tension in School Reform," *National Association of Secondary Principals Bulletin*, 2001.

Clarke, J., Aiken, J. and M.J. Sullivan. "Interactive Leadership in High School Innovation." *National Association of Secondary Principals Bulletin*, volume 83. 1999.

Crosby, J. and Keller, J. *Vermont School-to-Work, Five Years of Helping Students Succeed*, Keller and Fuller, Inc., 2000.

Cushman, K., Steinberg, A. and Riordan, R. *Rigor and Relevance: Essential Ideas about Connecting School and Work*. Jobs for the Future, Inc., Boston, 1995.

Fullan, M., B. Bennett and Rolheiser-Bennett, C. "Linking Classroom and School Improvement." *Educational Leadership*, volume 47. 1990.

Gardner H., (1990) *Frames of Mind, The Theory of Multiple Intelligence's*. Harper Collins, New York, 1993.

Gibson, D. and Clarke, J. (2000) *Growing Toward Systemic Change: Developing Personal Learning Plans at Montpelier High School*. Northeast and Islands Regional Educational Laboratory of Brown University, Providence, 2000.

Goldberger, S. and Kazis, R. *Revitalizing High Schools: What the School-to-Career Movement Can Contribute*. American Youth Policy Forum. Jobs for the Future, Inc., Boston, 2000.

Haycock, K. and Huang, S. "Thinking K-16, Youth at the Crossroads, Facing High School and Beyond, Are Today's High School Graduates Ready?" *Education Trust*, volume 5(I). 2001.

Hirsh, E. and Samuelson, S. *Teaching in Vermont: An Inventory of Policies and Practices*. National Conference of State Legislators, 2001.

Maine Commission on Secondary Education. *Promising Futures – A Call to Improved Learning for Maine's Secondary Students*. Augusta, Maine, 1998.

Murnane, R. and Levy, F. *Teaching the New Basic Skills-Principles for Educating Children to Thrive in a Changing Economy*. The Free Press, Cambridge, 1995.

National Association of Secondary School Principals, *Breaking Ranks: Changing an American Institution*, Washington, D.C., 1996.

National Commission on Excellence in Education. *A Nation at Risk: A Report to the Nation*. U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1983.





National Commission on the Senior Year. *Raising Our Sights: No High School Senior Left Behind*. Woodrow Wilson Foundation, Princeton, 2001.

National Committee for Economic Development. *The Employer's Role in Linking School and Work*, Washington, D.C., 2000.

National Conference of State Legislators. *Teaching in Vermont: An Inventory of Policies and Practices*, Montpelier, Vt., 2000.

National Education Commission on Time and Learning. *Prisoners of Time: Report of the National Commission on Time and Learning*. Washington, D.C., 1994.

National Education Summit. *Standards and Accountability: A Report from the Public Agenda*, 1999.

Peoples Academy. *Individualized Studies: A Guidebook for Students and Parents*. Morrisville, Vt., 2000.

Sizer, T. *Horace's Compromise: The Dilemma of the American High School*. Houghton Mifflin, Boston, 1984

Sizer, T. *Horace's School: Redesigning the American High School*. Houghton Mifflin, Boston, 1992.

Sizer, T. *Horace's Hope: What Works for the American High School*. Houghton Mifflin, Boston, 1996.

Southern Regional Education Board. *High Schools That Work*, 2000.

Steinberg, L. *Beyond the Classroom: Why School Reform has Failed and What Parents Need to Do*, Simon & Schuster, 1996.

U.S. Department of Education. *New American High Schools: In Their Own Words*. The Kamber Group, 1999.

U.S. Department of Education. *Aiming High, Strategies to Promote High Standards in High Schools*. MPR Associates, Berkeley, 1999.

U.S. Department of Education. *New American High Schools at the Leading Edge of Reform*. MPR Associates, Berkeley, 1999.

U.S. Department of Education. *Key Reform Strategies- An Overview of Research Findings*. MPR Associates, Berkeley, 1999.

Vermont Agency of Human Services, Department of Employment and Training, Department of Education, State Team for Children, Families and Individuals. *Outcomes-based Planning: State Partners and Local Communities Working Together to Improve the Well-being of Vermonters*. Montpelier, Vermont, 2000.

Vermont Business Roundtable. *From High School to Work Place*, Burlington, Vt., 1998.

Vermont Department of Education. *Recommendations to Establish a Statewide System of Educator Preparation and Professional Development*. Montpelier, Vt. 1998

Vermont Department of Education. *Vermont's Core Curriculum*. Montpelier, Vt., 1992.

Vermont Department of Education. *Vermont's Framework of Standards and Learning Opportunities*. Montpelier, Vt., 2000.

Vermont Department of Education. *School Quality Standards*. Montpelier, Vt., 2000.

Vermont Department of Health. *The 2001 Vermont Youth Risk Behavior Survey*. Montpelier, Vt., 2001.

Vermont Governor's Team on Dropout Prevention. *Dropouts in Vermont: A Charge for Action*. 1989.

Vermont Middle Grades Task Force. *The Middle Matters, Transforming Education of Vermont's Young Adolescents*. Vermont Department of Education, Montpelier, Vt., 1991.

Vermont Public Education Partnership. *An Alliance for Learning and Opportunity: The First Report of the Vermont Public Education Partnership*. 2001

Vermont State Goals 2000 Panel. *Final Report on Dropout Prevention: A Follow Up Study*. 2000.

Vermont Student Assistance Corporation. *Vermont Senior Survey: Class of 1999*. 1999.



---

For more information about  
*High Schools on The Move: Renewing Vermont's  
Commitment to Quality Secondary Education*  
please contact:

Andrea Silva McManus  
High School Renewal and Innovation Coordinator  
Vermont Department of Education  
120 State Street  
Montpelier, Vermont 05620-2501  
(802) 828-5131

[www.state.vt.us/educ/cwd/hsi/](http://www.state.vt.us/educ/cwd/hsi/)

Logo and Document Design  
Jan Doerler  
Creative Vision Design  
Burlington, Vermont